AI.

May 2025 | aimagazine.com

TOP 10
AI CONSULTING FIRMS

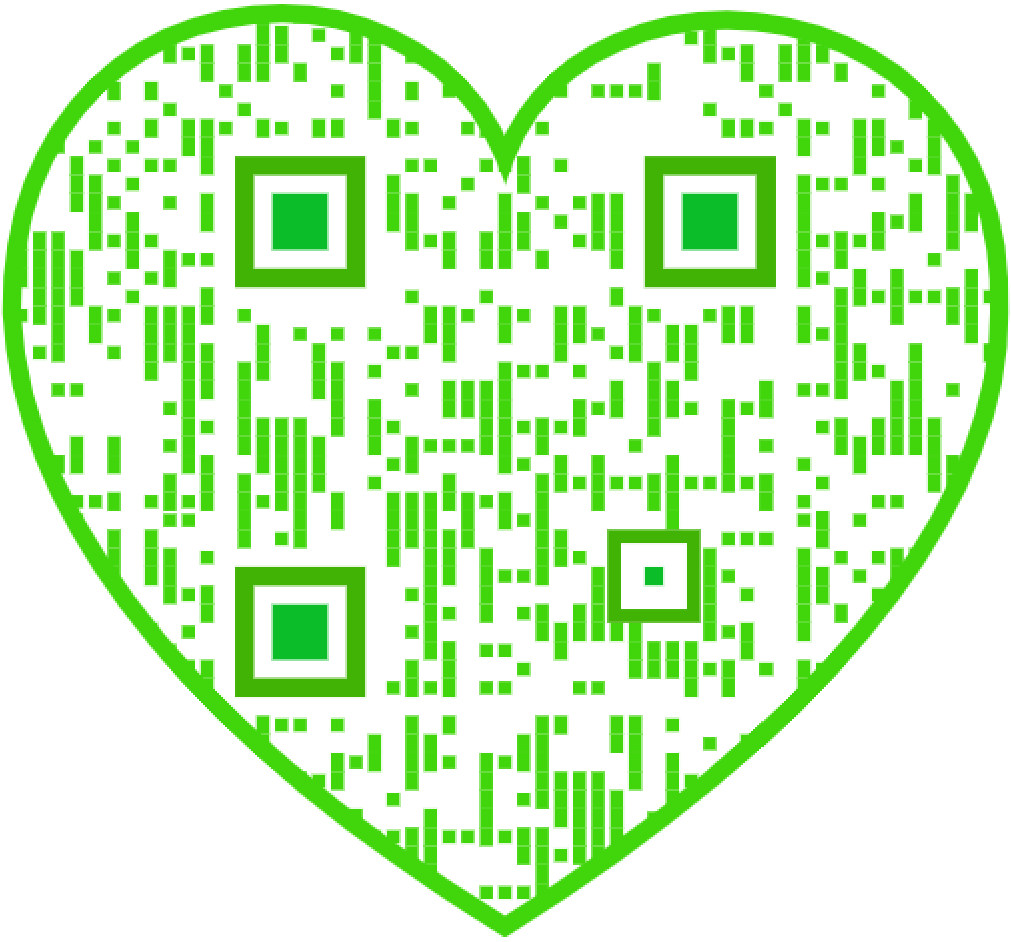
NVIDIA
Transforming telecoms with AI

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
Qualtrics and McKinsey on CX innovation

WILDFIRE WATCH

How Google's FireSat uses advanced AI to spot deadly wildfires from space

PEPSICO | SUNRISE | KEVLINX | ABZENA



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AI'S NEWEST ERA: PROTECTING THE PLANET

AI application and adoption is so rapid, and so widespread, that it's easy for it to sometimes start to feel – dare we say it – normal? Then something like our cover story, Google's FireSat, comes across your desk and you remember just why the world is so in love with the technology.

The project, led by Google's Research team has all the makings of a great tech story: rockets, space, advanced AI and social impact. It uses AI to detect and track wildfires only 5x5 metres in size (not much larger than the room I'm writing this from), which is both incredible and potentially life-saving.

The rest of our content this month will leave you equally inspired, whether it's a deep-dive into AI-driven customer experience, our discussion with NVIDIA's Ronnie Vasishta hot off the heels of the company's GTC conference, or our AI in the enterprise case studies with the likes of Sunrise, PepsiCo and many more.

Enjoy the issue.

Kitty Wheeler

KITTY WHEELER

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WILDFIRE WATCH

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CONTENTS

14 ROBOTICS
AI-powered NEO GAMMA meets NVIDIA's Jensen Huang

16 GEN AI
Month in numbers

18 PEOPLE MOVES
Executive moves this month

22 TOP 10
Global AI consulting firms

40 TECHNOLOGY
The AI Interview – Ronnie Vasishta, SVP Telecom, NVIDIA

50 SUNRISE
Digital transformation powers Swiss telco's future

Ronnie Vasishta,
SVP Telecom,
NVIDIA

22
TOP 10
GLOBAL AI CONSULTING FIRMS

MAY 2025

The Google Research-led FireSat uses advanced AI and high-res imagery to spot small fires from space

70 KEVLINX DATA CENTERS
AI-ready data centres for Europe's emerging markets

88 AI APPLICATIONS
How AI is supercharging CX

102 PEPSICO
How digital transformation is empowering PepsiCo's procurement

118 ABZENA
How biotech leader Abzena uses technology to meet medical needs

134 MACHINE LEARNING
Google – using AI satellites to tackle wildfires

146 STONEGATE GROUP
How is Stonegate Group's digital journey reshaping UK pubs?

164 DCC TECHNOLOGY
Enhancing lives through progressive technology

182 PLDCA
Poland: A cool place for data centre development

200 METROBLOKS
Defining AI-ready data centres in urban metro markets

214 INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS
IPS rebuilding education through cloud transformation

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- ✓ Mitigation strategies to prevent the exploit of memory-based vulnerabilities and zero days

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MAY **2025**

228

Sreeveni Kancharla,
CIO,
SailPoint

244

Aggelos Karonis,
Head of Technology,
Information Security,
Kaizen Gaming

228 SAILPOINT
How SailPoint charts a course through AI security waters

244 KAIZEN GAMING
Security strategy enabling global expansion

262 SEVENUP BOTTLING COMPANY
Inside SevenUp Bottling Company's digital transformation

280 A1
A1's data centres: Powering digital transformation

296 US INDO-PACIFIC COMMAND
Invests in tech transformation

280

Bojan Klasan,
Head of Data Centre,
A1 Croatia

ADVER
WORK W

T PAGE
WITH US

BIG PICTURE

CREDIT: 1X TECHNOLOGIES

AI-POWERED NEO GAMMA MEETS NVIDIA'S JENSEN HUANG

NVIDIA Co-Founder and CEO Jensen Huang is a man well-known for wearing black leather jackets – so much so that there's even a Business Insider study into how many he owns (he's worn six since 2017, should you be wondering).

But we'll wager even he hasn't been presented with a customised number by a humanoid robot while on stage.

The symbolic handover took place at the San Francisco HQ of 1X Technologies, the creator of the humanoid known as NEO GAMMA, after Jensen had given the keynote at NVIDIA's GTC 2025.

There, he discussed the two firms' collaboration, introducing NVIDIA's Isaac GROOT N1, the world's first open, fully customisable foundational model for generalised humanoid reasoning and skills.

Built on a dual-system architecture, GROOT N1 is inspired by human cognition, capable of reasoning about its environment, mirroring human reflexes and deliberate, methodical decision making. ○

MONTH IN NUMB

33x

The World Economic Forum reports that Gen AI models may use around 33 times more energy to complete a task compared to task-specific software

19%

Goldman Sachs expects AI to represent 19% of data centre power demand by 2028

According to IBM,

49%

of organisations have fully implemented AI for sustainable design

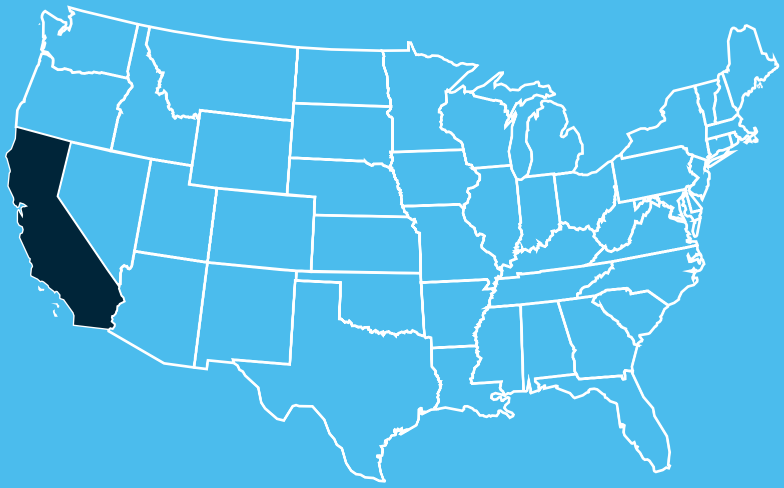
42%

of executives are having to re-examine their previously set climate goals because of the impact of Gen AI

ERS

50GWh

Training OpenAI's GPT-4 required 50GWh of electricity, approximately 0.02% of the electricity California generates in a year



7 days

Google's Flood Hub AI models can warn people 7 days in advance of potentially life-threatening flooding that results from climate change

PEOPLE MO

AI Magazine's run down of the latest executive appointments and departures driving innovation, strategic success and ethical AI adoption

WRITTEN BY: KITTY WHEELER

JANET GEORGE

JOB FROM: **CVP AND GM OF DATA CENTER AND AI AT INTEL**

JOB TO: **EVP OF AI AT MASTERCARD**

Mastercard has appointed Janet George as its Executive Vice President of AI. She will leverage her expertise from Intel and Oracle, drive secure, personalised payment solutions and oversee the company's AI Center of Excellence, enhancing data science efforts to advance Mastercard's global digital economy mission.

> **"It's clear that AI and data are not just tools – they are foundations of our future"**

OVES

Janet George,
EVP of AI,
Mastercard

Barak Turovsky,
CAO,
General Motors

Mano
Mannoochahr,
Chief Data,
Analytics &
AI Officer,
Verizon

PEOPLE MO

BARAK TUROVSKY

JOB FROM: **VP OF AI AT CISCO**

JOB TO: **CAO AT GENERAL MOTORS**

General Motors (GM) has appointed its first Chief AI Officer, Barak Turovsky. Barak has a wealth of experience as an AI leader from his previous roles at Google and Cisco, which will be key to driving GM's strategy to leverage AI across its business, from vehicle innovation to operational efficiency.

MANO MANNOOCHAHR

JOB FROM: **SVP AND CHIEF DATA AND ANALYTICS OFFICER AT TRAVELERS**

JOB TO: **CHIEF DATA, ANALYTICS & AI OFFICER AT VERIZON**

Verizon has named Mano Mannoochahr, who has over 25 years of experience with AI, as its Chief Data, Analytics & AI Officer.

The move represents a push to embed AI across Verizon's operations, from customer service to network management. Mano brings expertise in scaling enterprise AI solutions, having led digital transformations at Travelers, GE and John Deere.

Shreya Amin,
CAIO,
The New York State Office
of Information Technology
Services (ITS)

OVES

SHREYA AMIN

JOB FROM: **CHIEF DATA AND AI SCIENTIST AT WELLIST**

JOB TO: **CAIO AT THE NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (ITS)**

The New York State Office of Information Technology Services (ITS) has named Shreya Amin its inaugural Chief AI Officer (CAIO).

She will be tasked with driving AI strategy across state agencies with a particular focus on positioning New York as a leader in ethical, government-led AI innovation.

TOP 10

GLOBAL AI CONSULTIN

AI Magazine highlights some of the top consulting firms helping enterprises navigate AI adoption, deployment and strategy

WRITTEN BY: **KITTY WHEELER**

From automating routine tasks to providing sophisticated predictive analytics, AI creates numerous opportunities for enterprises to accelerate growth and efficiency.

However, navigating the complexities of AI adoption, implementation and scaling often requires specialised knowledge and expertise that many businesses may lack internally.

G FIRMS

This means that, as companies strive to keep up with AI's evolution, a greater gap is appearing between vision and execution – and this is where AI consulting firms come in.

Consulting firms provide the necessary support to demystify AI, identify relevant use cases, develop robust strategies and implement solutions that deliver measurable business value.

10

WIPRO

EMPLOYEES: **245,000**
CEO: **SRINI PALLIA**
FOUNDED: **1945**

Wipro distinguishes itself in the AI consulting solutions market with a strong emphasis on a human-centric approach, using technology-neutral strategies to achieve outcome-driven automation. Specifically, its AI360 platform serves as an enterprise-wide hub for AI innovation, seamlessly integrating AI across business processes and functions.

Wipro's proprietary AI framework, HOLMES, also delivers advanced solutions in automation and analytics, with the primary goal of reducing operational inefficiencies and enhancing decision-making capabilities for clients.

Srini Pallia,
CEO,
Wipro

WATCH NOW

Wipro's AI-powered innovation helps clients build future-ready businesses

09

PWC

EMPLOYEES: **370,000**
CEO: **MOHAMED KANDE**
FOUNDED: **1998**

PwC has established its reputation in AI consultancy by offering a broad suite of AI solutions spanning intelligent automation, machine learning and advanced data analytics.

Particularly noteworthy is its expertise in implementing AI within highly regulated industries such as banking and healthcare, where it excels at automating critical risk management processes.

PwC also places significant emphasis on responsible AI methodologies – providing managed AI services to provide ongoing support and optimisation, ensuring sustainable value from AI implementations.

Mohamed Kande,
CEO,
PwC

WATCH NOW
What does responsible AI look like in the age of agentic AI?

Henkel Adhesive Technologies

PAGE-TURNING
INSIGHTS

UNIQU
ELY
WIRED
Inside the
minds of
innovato
Discover how data
center and telecom
professionals
are driving their
industries forward.
Henkel
Vol 1
//
Henkel Adhesive Technologies

Explore the expansive world of AI. Uniquely Wired is by, for, and about the data and telecom engineers who create the future.

Download magazine

08

MCKINSEY & COMPANY (INCLUDING QUANTUMBLACK)

EMPLOYEES: **45,000**

CEO: **BOB STERNFELS (MCKINSEY)**

FOUNDED: **1926**

McKinsey & Company has enhanced its AI consulting capabilities and services through the acquisition of QuantumBlac, which is now the company's specialised AI arm.

Through QuantumBlack, McKinsey combines technological capabilities with creative expertise to deliver tailored solutions across diverse industries.

McKinsey's proprietary platforms, including QuantumBlack Labs and McKinsey QuantumBlack AI Studio, facilitate the rapid experimentation and scaling of sophisticated AI models.

As a result, the company's expertise now spans Gen AI, advanced analytics and intelligent automation.

Bob Sternfels, CEO, McKinsey & Company

McKinsey & Company

WATCH NOW

How is QuantumBlack helping clients overcome AI challenges?

07

INFOSYS

EMPLOYEES: **317,240**
CEO: **SALIL PAREKH**
FOUNDED: **1981**

Infosys's 'AI-first' strategy hones in on the integration of AI across all its service offerings, to enable clients to automate processes and achieve operational efficiencies across a spectrum of industries.

The company has further positioned itself as an AI consulting leader through investments in proprietary platforms such as Infosys Topaz.

It provides its AI transformation services by combining deep technical expertise with robust domain knowledge, all supported by a global delivery model.

CREDIT: INFOSYS

Salil Parekh, CEO, Infosys

Infosys

WATCH NOW

Infosys Europe – pioneering the future of digital innovation and AI leadership

06

EY (ERNST & YOUNG)

EMPLOYEES: **400,000**
CEO: **JANET TRUNCALE**
FOUNDED: **1989**

EY has made substantial investments in its unified AI platform, EY.ai.

Now, its AI consultancy services assist clients in navigating the complexities of adoption and implementation, with offerings spanning intelligent automation, ML and advanced data analytics.

The establishment of the EY.ai Global AI Advisory Council, comprising experts from business, government and academia, further solidifies its commitment to responsible AI advancement.

EY also places particular emphasis on implementing AI solutions that are transparent, fair and compliant with relevant regulations.

EY

WATCH NOW
Is artificial intelligence actually intelligent?

CREDIT: EY

Janet Truncale,
CEO,
EY

05

CAPGEMINI

EMPLOYEES: **350,000**
CEO: **AIMAN EZZAT**
FOUNDED: **1967**

Through a holistic approach, Capgemini's AI consulting integrates AI with broader business strategies, cloud technologies, data analytics and cybersecurity measures.

Its AI suite encompasses intelligent automation, ML and conversational AI solutions.

Recognising the potential of Gen AI, Capgemini has also launched a dedicated portfolio focused on strategy development, enhancing customer experiences and improving software engineering efficiency through AI-powered tools.

The company places strong emphasis on ethical AI considerations, robust governance frameworks and effective organisational change management.

CREDIT: CAPGEMINI

Aiman Ezzat,
CEO,
Capgemini

WATCH NOW
Ali Murtaza's trajectory
into the world of
Gen AI at Capgemini

04

BOSTON CONSULTING GROUP (BCG)

EMPLOYEES: **33,000**
CEO: **CHRISTOPH SCHWEIZER**
FOUNDED: **1963**

Boston Consulting Group (BCG) delivers AI consulting services through its specialised technology and design division, BCG X.

These include developing tailored AI strategies, identifying high-impact use cases and providing implementation support.

Today, the company distinguishes itself by directly linking AI solutions to financial outcomes, a capability that resonates with business leaders seeking a clear return on AI investments.

Its ‘deploy, reshape and invent’ framework guides organisations through their AI adoption journey, ensuring both immediate productivity gains and long-term strategic advantages.

BCG

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Getting started with AI

CREDIT: BCG

Christoph Schweizer, CEO, BCG

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03

IBM CONSULTING

EMPLOYEES: **160,000**
CEO: **ARVIND KRISHNA**
FOUNDED: **1992**

Arvind Krishna,
CEO,
IBM

Harnessing its AI services platform, IBM Consulting Advantage, IBM assists businesses in designing, building and scaling AI solutions.

With Arvind Krishna as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, IBM is accelerating the way businesses align their AI strategies with overall business objectives.

The company's AI service portfolio encompasses strategy development, seamless integration with existing systems, deep expertise in Gen AI and data landscape transformation.

IBM's proprietary Watsonx platform provides a foundation for developing and deploying AI-powered solutions across business functions.

WATCH NOW

Reimagine business productivity with AI agents and assistants

Joseph B.
Ucuzoglu,
CEO,
Deloitte

02

DELOITTE

EMPLOYEES: **460,000**
CEO: **JOSEPH B. UCUZOGLU**
FOUNDED: **1845**

Deloitte provides AI and data services designed to help businesses extract meaningful insights through a strategic combination of analytics, automation and AI.

Its AI consulting offerings include developing strategies aligned with business objectives, using AI-driven insights to enhance decision-making, modernising analytics infrastructure using cloud-enabled platforms, and implementing intelligent automation to optimise operational processes.

As a result, the company assists clients across various industries in harnessing AI to achieve organisational and operational optimisation.

In addition, its exploration of emerging technologies such as spatial AI and metaverse applications demonstrates a forward-thinking approach to staying competitive now and in the future.

Deloitte.

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How generative
AI is transforming
enterprise operations

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tomorrow’s data
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ndence

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01

ACCENTURE

EMPLOYEES: **774,000**
CEO: **JULIE SWEET**
FOUNDED: **1989**

Accenture is led by Chief Executive Officer, Julie Sweet, who views AI as a catalyst for enterprise reinvention.

As a result, the company's AI consulting services help businesses navigate the complexities of AI through tailored strategy development as well as responsible AI implementation, Gen AI expertise and AI-powered data transformation.

Its extensive global presence and large-scale operations provide a distinct advantage in undertaking complex AI projects for multinational corporations. The company is also collaborating with leading technology providers to deliver customised, scalable AI solutions.

Accenture's investments and successful deals in the growing Gen AI space highlight its strong position in this rapidly evolving market.

Furthermore, the firm focuses on making sure its AI services are also responsible, in line with the increasing need for ethical and accountable implementations across the world. o

accenture

WATCH NOW
Accenture & Vodafone – AI-driven digital transformation

TO READ MORE TOP 10s, CLICK HERE

Julie Sweet,
CEO,
Accenture

The AI Interview

RONNIE VASISHTA

SVP Telecom, NVIDIA

NVIDIA's Ronnie Vasishta on a career at the forefront of innovation and how AI is transforming global industries including telecoms

WRITTEN BY: MATT HIGH

CREDIT: NVIDIA

Ronnie Vasishta,
SVP Telecom,
NVIDIA

RONNIE VASISHTA

TITLE: SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT TELECOM

COMPANY: NVIDIA

INDUSTRY: TELECOMS

Ronnie is Senior Vice President Telecom at NVIDIA, responsible for the telecom business, strategy and products, including driving innovation in AI and accelerated computing for telecom companies.

There's a recurring theme when you meet the world's most successful technology leaders: a seemingly endless passion for innovation and the 'new', and a need to understand the mechanics of extracting the most value from any given solution. Or, as Ronnie Vasishta modestly calls it when recounting his earliest years, 'tinkering'.

In this instance, that tinkering, which has its roots in a degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering and desire to know how transistors were made – a fundamental element of the semiconductor industry – has served Ronnie well. Over more than three decades he has worked in roles spanning semiconductor engineering, product planning, strategic marketing and executive leadership at LSI Logica, privately held eASIC Corporation, Intel and NVIDIA.

"My passion for connecting the technology dots and technology interactions has driven an all-consuming interest in technology innovation across a broad spectrum of disciplines," Ronnie says. "I've always wanted to challenge myself by moving domains. Throughout my career I've been involved in defining new technologies and connecting them to market opportunities – sometimes even before the market opportunities were apparent. They're experiences that helped me get comfortable being uncomfortable.

"As CEO of eASIC, I scaled the company from pre-revenue to its successful acquisition by Intel. Our largest customers were telecoms equipment providers and I recognised that this was a market space that needed innovation," he adds. "At Intel I led programmable solutions for telecoms, driving advancements such as the cloudification of the Radio Access Network (RAN)."

Ronnie joined NVIDIA in late 2022 in the role of Senior Vice President Telecom, where he is responsible for the telecom business, strategy and products. "I leverage these years of experience to drive innovation in AI and accelerated computing for telecoms," he explains. "My focus is on transforming great ideas into scalable solutions that redefine industries, including technologies like 5G and 6G networks."

Innovation in telecoms: using AI to solve complex challenges

Considering his passion for innovation, Ronnie couldn't have chosen a better time to be at the forefront of the telecoms industry. Over the last couple of years the fusion of AI and telecommunications has transformed the sector, including improving network efficiency and performance, enhancing customer experience and service, and driving new business models and opportunities.

NVIDIA has been at the heart of much of this growth, actively collaborating with the industry to integrate AI into companies' networks and services.

Ronnie has seen the pace of AI development grow rapidly over his career, particularly in telecoms, spotting its potential early-on while CEO at

WATCH NOW

Exclusive Interview:
Ronnie Vasishta, SVP
Telecom at Nvidia

eASIC. “It was around 2015,” he recalls. “I thought we could build a programmable AI chip that would benefit some of our telecoms customers but, at that stage, the problem was too difficult to solve in a small company.

“Even then it was clear to me that Deep Learning had tremendous potential, but I didn’t know yet which silicon platform could solve this performance and power trade-off. I also didn’t realise that NVIDIA was working on solving this exact challenge. When it announced its collaboration with Ericsson on software defined 5G in 2018, it became clear to me how AI could solve many of the technical and business model challenges in the telecoms industry.”

How NVIDIA is at the forefront of the AI era

The speed of the AI uptake since has been significant, as demonstrated in NVIDIA’s own third annual State of AI in Telecommunications survey, published at the start of 2025. This highlights how the telecoms industry is integrating AI across the board, from deploying external solutions like customer assistants and Gen AI solutions, through to network and infrastructure technology including integrating AI into the RAN.

According to NVIDIA’s research, 84% of telecoms professionals worldwide said AI is helping increase their company’s annual revenue, while 80% identified the technology as crucial for future success.

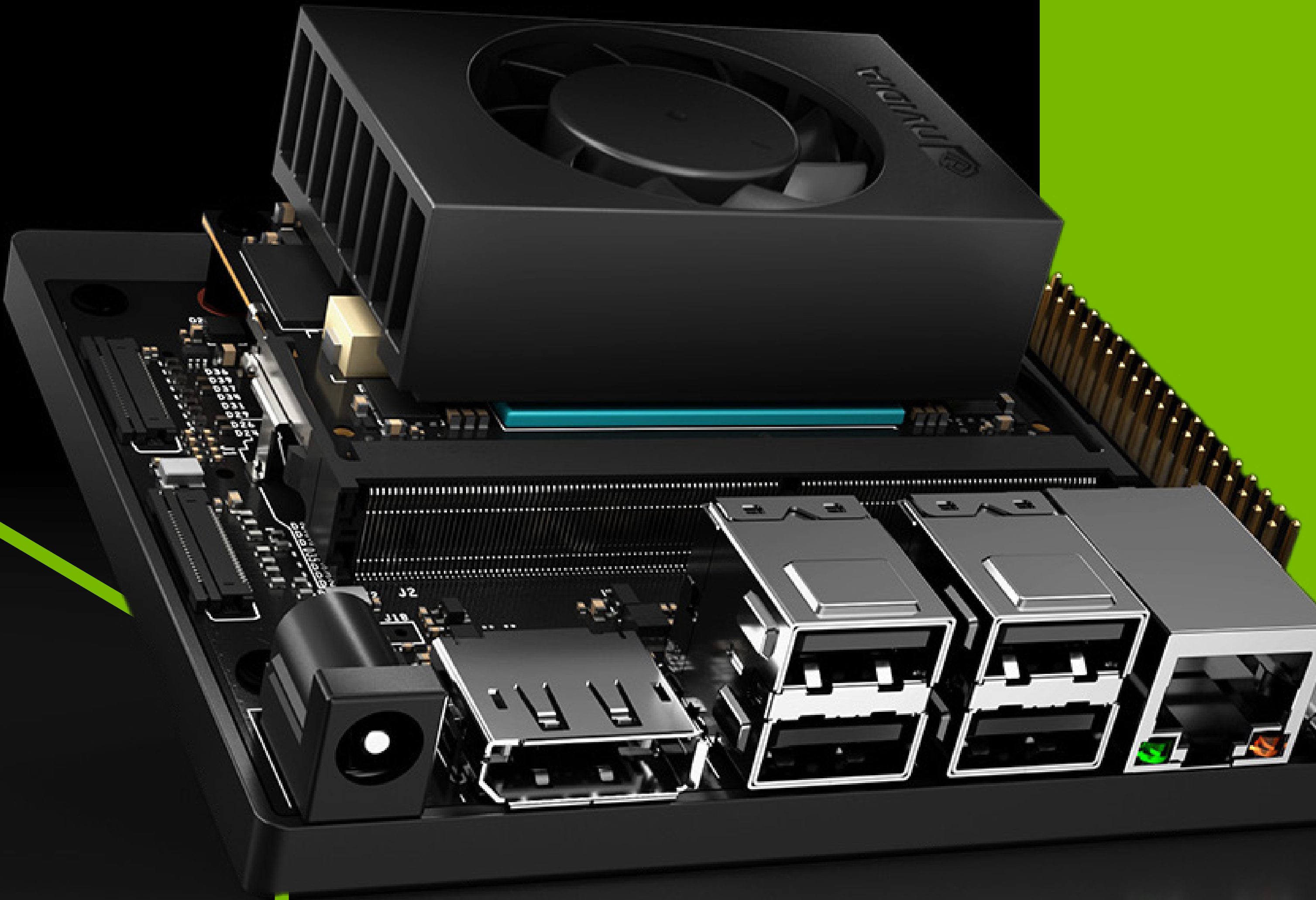
CREDIT: NVIDIA

“It’s a great time to be in the telecoms industry, as the AI era will have a huge impact”

RONNIE VASISHTA
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT TELECOM, NVIDIA

“It’s a great time to be in the telecoms industry, as the AI era will have a huge impact,” says Ronnie. “We are only about two years into the AI era and the early impacts are already visible. Seventeen telcos around the world have already engaged in building AI factories with NVIDIA, marking an unprecedented revenue opportunity for companies who are often seen as the trusted providers of critical infrastructure in a region.

“Telcos are also starting to broadly adopt AI for customer experience enhancement and internal productivity gains,” he continues. “Additionally, now that we’ve shown that homogenous infrastructure can run AI and Radio



CREDIT: NVIDIA

NVIDIA Jetson
Orin Nano
Developer Kit

Access Network (RAN) software stacks, we are starting to see the momentum of AI-RAN."

NVIDIA has been at the forefront of deploying AI-enabled Radio Access Networks – part of the cellular network that connects user devices like smartphones to the core network – for several years, collaborating with telcos and research leaders to develop an AI-native wireless network stack based on its AI Aerial platform.

The next generation of wireless network hardware, software and architecture to support 6G will need to be fundamentally integrated with AI in order to seamlessly connect the hundreds of billions of phones, sensors, cameras, robots and autonomous vehicles. This can only be delivered by the creation of networks that are software defined, programmable and run on intelligent hardware infrastructure.

AI-RAN brings AI and RAN workloads together on one platform and embeds AI into radio signal processing. To deliver enhanced spectral efficiency and lower operational complexity and costs, AI will be fully embedded into the network stack's software and hosted over a unified accelerated infrastructure, capable of running both network and AI workloads.

AI as an enabler of large-scale transformation

NVIDIA has had a busy start to 2025, discussing developments in this field at the Mobile World Congress and the company's own GTC global AI conference for developers, engineers, researchers, inventors and IT leaders. Specifically at

GTC, the company unveiled partnerships with industry leaders including T-Mobile, MITRE, Cisco, ODC and Booz Allen Hamilton on the R&D of AI-native wireless network hardware, software and architecture for 6G.

"About a year ago we were one of the founding companies within the AI-RAN Alliance," Ronnie says. "In just one year that has grown from 10 founding members to 75 member companies across 17 countries.

"The first step NVIDIA took was to accelerate Layer1 of the 5G software stack using accelerated compute platforms. Now we are seeing how AI and ML can benefit the spectral and power efficiency of the Radio Access Network," he adds, discussing the company's development efforts in this area.

Around three years ago, the company released Sionna, a differentiable link layer simulator and open-source tool, which has since been downloaded 150,000 times. "There is a pent-up demand from wireless researchers to demonstrate how AI and ML can enhance or even replace conventional algorithms and techniques," Ronnie highlights. "Now wireless networks can learn their environment, be trained, simulated and deployed in a matter of minutes rather than days.

"The shift from traditional proprietary, single use wireless systems to software -defined, AI-driven, multi-use systems extends benefits across business models, R&D and deployment. We see 6G as a software upgrade, building on these innovations."

AI and telecoms driving broader change

Discussing NVIDIA's AI-RAN collaboration announcement at GTC, Ronnie says the revolutionary approach will underpin the journey to effective 6G in the future: "The industry has recognised that AI is essential for delivering many of the applications touted for 6G, such as immersive or augmented experiences, autonomous vehicles, generative AI agents on mobile devices and instant language translation.

"This group of leading companies have set out with the mission to build networks with AI infused from the start, unencumbered by legacy, non-AI techniques. These networks will be self -adapting, power efficient and multi-use, and will be developed collaboratively to serve as deployable blueprints."

Developments like these show the power of AI, and the ability it has to transform industries globally at scale. Looking ahead, Ronnie points to the technology's potential for transforming lives on a global scale: "Democratising wireless research and enabling innovative researchers to directly influence the 6G standards is truly exciting. We know that a host of new AI applications are possible when AI is embedded into the wireless network.

"This level of change and opportunity has never existed before in the telecoms and related industries. Working with the industry around the world and seeing the innovation possible with the full stack AI building blocks from NVIDIA, it is clear to me that the lives of literally billions of people can be positively impacted. Healthcare, education and agriculture can all benefit from the fusion of AI and telecommunications." ○

BizClik

T

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION POWERS SWISS TELCO'S FUTURE

WRITTEN BY:
MARCUS LAW

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS VAUGHAN

Sunrise CIO **Anna Maria Blengino** is charting the course for technological transformation at Switzerland's second-largest telecommunications provider

Telecommunications providers across Europe face mounting pressure to transform their operations as the market for traditional revenue streams from voice and messaging services is saturated. As a result, the industry's focus has shifted toward digital services, data management and infrastructure modernisation to meet evolving customer expectations and boost innovation in its core business – connectivity.

In Switzerland, this transformation carries particular weight. The country's position as a global financial centre, combined with its high concentration of multinational corporations, creates demands for advanced telecommunications infrastructure. As a result, Swiss providers must balance network reliability with innovation while operating within strict regulatory frameworks governing data protection and privacy.

Sunrise – the country's second-largest telecommunications provider – has responded to these challenges by strengthening the company's market position through technology modernisation and digital services expansion. The transformation is particularly focused on infrastructure development, digital innovations and customer experience enhancement.

"The demand for digital infrastructure has grown exponentially over the last 20 years, driven by rapid advancements in technology, widespread digital transformation, and the increasing reliance on data-driven services,"

Anna Maria Blengino,
CIO,
Sunrise

explains Anna Maria Blengino, Chief Information Officer at Sunrise. “Access to fast and reliable internet connections has become crucial in everybody’s daily private and work life, at the same time it is a commodity today, with billions of users worldwide.”

The evolution from structured to unstructured data has pushed providers to adopt new approaches to data handling and AI. Modern telecommunications infrastructure must support video conferencing, streaming services, cloud applications and Internet of Things (IoT)-ready devices.

“Digital transformation is central to any business strategy today,” notes Anna Maria, “with organisations adopting cloud, AI, automation and advanced analytics to drive efficiency, innovation and customer engagement – and all of this based on seamless connectivity provided by most reliable network infrastructures.”

“By establishing a unified data platform to aggregate data from various sources and using AI/ML models to generate actionable insights, we drive customer retention and loyalty”

ANNA MARIA BLENGINO,
CIO,
SUNRISE

For Sunrise, this landscape presents both challenges and opportunities. The company’s transformation encompasses cloud migration, AI implementation and operational automation, while maintaining focus on its core mission of providing seamless telecommunications services to Swiss residential and business customers.

Digital transformation strategy: Sunrise’s core foundations

Today, Sunrise delivers the highest gigabit coverage in Switzerland through its fixed and mobile infrastructure, positioning itself as a premium service provider in a market known for its demanding standards.

“Sunrise is Switzerland’s leading challenger, with a strong number two position in the Swiss telecommunications market,” explains Anna Maria. “By providing the most comprehensive fixed network access and a world-class mobile network we are delivering the highest gigabit coverage in Switzerland.”

In addition to mobile, landline, broadband and TV services for residential customers, Sunrise provides integrated ICT solutions for business clients, including connectivity, security and IoT services. Each of these services generates valuable data that – when properly aggregated and analysed – can enhance service innovation and delivery and customer experience.

To manage this complexity, Sunrise has developed what Anna Maria calls a “Strong Technological and Delivery Backbone.” This involves using

SUNRISE-INFOSYS

AN EVOLVING PARTNERSHIP

Switzerland is more than just a picture postcard destination; it is a canvas of possibilities. Picture the Alps where snow clad peaks inspire trekkers.

Or take the movement of the Swiss mechanical watch, a byword of efficiency even in the digital age. Better still, teleport yourself to Basel or Zurich, and you can feel the pulse of global finance. In this landscape, Sunrise is the premium and scaled challenger in Switzerland's telco market.

Anna Maria Blengino, CIO at Sunrise, an Italian born Swiss citizen, has a vantage view of Sunrise. After joining Sunrise in 2005, she performed diverse roles before being appointed CIO in 2023. When Liberty Global, the world leader in converged broadband, video and mobile communications, acquired Sunrise, Anna Maria was part of the leadership team that navigated the transition.

The challenges of a telecom merger prepared her for disruption by technology, which served as the catalyst for innovative products and services. The consolidation and transformation journeys required by this acquisition, gave Anna Maria an insider's experience to discuss the shifts in technology of telecom.

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TRUST IN TECHNOLOGY

> **"Sunrise needs to keep evolving as technology evolves,"**

Says Anna Maria who has a degree in engineering, experience in banking, and a career in deep tech. Sunrise retired legacy systems, consolidated IT stacks, and then scaled up the architecture to a next maturity stage.

The main drivers for this transformation are digitalization, automation of process flows and operations, infrastructure scalability, security embedded by design.

Sunrise is now prioritising AI to become future proof. Key areas have been identified to leverage AI. Firstly, network operations, specifically in maintaining world-class quality of service and safeguarding the network with preventive maintenance. Secondly, thoughtful customer support, be it self-service enabled by a chatbot to guide customers with their enquires or contact centre or shop agents to better serve our customers' interactions. Finally, maximising enterprise productivity by distilling business insights and empowering employees' efficiency.

PARTNERSHIP THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Sunrise has nurtured a global partner ecosystem to achieve its long-term goals. In 2021, Sunrise engaged with Infosys to plan and deliver its IT transformation agenda after a merger with UPC. Infosys implemented a seamless consolidation of the UPC IT estate and developed an advanced digital engagement layer.

Today, Infosys is a preferred IT services partner of Sunrise, supporting the telco in building and operating a majority of platforms across its IT landscape. Robust execution by Infosys enables Sunrise to set the strategic direction of next-generation digital services.

The Sunrise-Infosys partnership is built on mutual confidence and trust. The initial IT project was planned and executed during peak lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even as the world came to a standstill, the Sunrise and Infosys teams worked shoulder-to-shoulder, supported each other in adverse circumstances, and delivered the project while working remotely.

We actively promote co-location to strengthen cultural alignment and enhance collaboration. Infosys team members rotate through Switzerland, while Sunrise employees spend time on-site with Infosys colleagues in India—fostering mutual understanding and a true one-team mindset.

Technology & Innovation Focus

AI-Driven Future

Digital Reinvention

Security by Design

The Sunrise-Infosys partnership serves as a playbook for strategic collaboration. A mutual pursuit of excellence is setting benchmarks in the telecom domain.

advanced digital tools to streamline processes, ensuring infrastructure scalability and security, and creating new value streams. The company's CIO unit has implemented a dynamic, iterative operational model to enhance flexibility and rapid delivery, exemplified by its adoption of DevSecOps software delivery practices.

This focus on data management and analysis has led Sunrise to implement a comprehensive unified data platform which aggregates information from multiple sources, including customer interactions, network performance metrics and billing systems – creating a foundation for advanced analytics and AI applications.

"The adoption of AI and ML technologies embedded in applications has become a major business advantage," says Anna Maria. "By establishing a unified data platform to aggregate data from various sources and using AI/ML models to generate actionable insights for personalised customer experiences, predictive maintenance and fraud prevention and detection, we drive customer retention and loyalty, enable targeted marketing and upselling opportunities and improve customer support efficiency."

Cloud migration: Modernising telecom infrastructure

A central element of Sunrise's CIO strategy involves migrating core systems to cloud platforms. The company has partnered with Oracle to implement

ANNA MARIA BLENGINO

TITLE: **CIO**

Anna Maria Blengino has been working in the telecom industry for 20 years and has been leading 180 employees as CIO of Sunrise since 2023. She holds a Master's degree in Engineering from Turin Polytechnic and an Executive Management Certificate from INSEAD. In Sunrise's digital transformation process, she focuses on cloud migration, AI implementation, and operational automation. The right strategic partners play a crucial role in this process.

Exadata Cloud@Customer for operations and billing systems, using a hybrid solution. This allows Sunrise to maintain data within its data centres while accessing cloud computing capabilities.

"The deployment in our own data centres will enable us to retain full control of data governance and adhere to compliance with data security and local regulations," notes Anna Maria. "Oracle Exadata Cloud@Customer provides data management automation features that help Sunrise increase operational efficiency."

The company deploys core applications in lightweight containers that can be replicated and distributed easily across servers to handle larger loads.

"We are using cloud services that allow for dynamic scaling of resources," Anna Maria explains. "This means that as demand increases or decreases, computing power, storage or bandwidth can automatically be adjusted."

Sunrise Embraces Oracle’s Cloud Solutions For Digital Growth

Oracle Exadata Cloud@Customer helps the Swiss telecom provider to deliver secure and fast services while complying with strict regulatory standards

In a significant advancement for its digital transformation strategy, Sunrise, a leading Swiss telecommunications provider, has partnered with Oracle to implement Exadata Cloud@Customer solutions.

This collaboration aims to modernise Sunrise’s IT infrastructure while maintaining control over crucial systems and data. It represents a strategic move that allows Sunrise to leverage cloud technology advantages while keeping sensitive data within their own data centres, addressing both performance needs and regulatory compliance requirements.

Anna Maria Blengino, CIO of Sunrise, explains that this approach delivers essential cloud benefits without compromising on security.

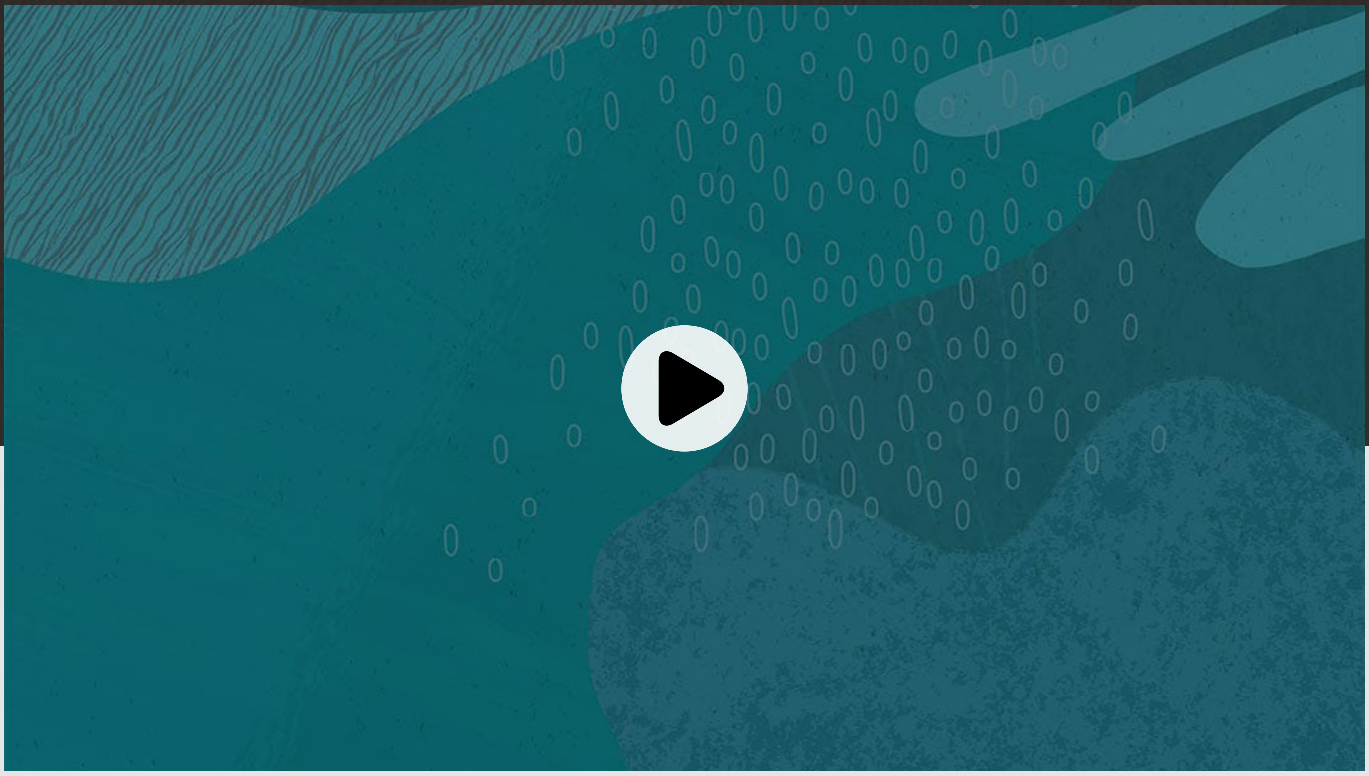
“For Sunrise, having full control over data and performance is crucial, especially with strict security and compliance needs,” she says.

Supporting service delivery

The implementation specifically supports Sunrise’s Operations Support System (OSS) and Business Support System (BSS), which form the backbone of the telecommunications company’s service delivery infrastructure.

Billy Kneubühl, Country Leader for Oracle Switzerland, highlights how this technology fits into Sunrise’s broader strategy: “Exadata Cloud@Customer fits into Sunrise’s digital transformation strategy by modernising their IT setup without overhauling everything or losing control over important systems.”

This approach allows the telecommunications provider to maintain security and efficiency while gaining flexibility and responsiveness in their operations and service delivery. The solution addresses Switzerland’s stringent regulatory environment for data management and security.



"This approach meets strict Swiss regulatory requirements and provides customers with confidence that their data is securely stored and processed within national borders," Anna Maria reveals.

She continues by noting that the on-premises cloud solution "minimises latency, optimises performance for mission-critical applications and offers high availability with robust disaster recovery mechanisms."

Future-proofing telecommunications services

The partnership delivers immediate benefits while positioning Sunrise for future innovation. Billy says the solution "supports long-term goals like exploring AI, automation and other advanced technologies."

For Sunrise, reestablished as a distinctly Swiss brand, having strong local partnerships has become increasingly important. The Oracle collaboration provides both advanced technology and local expertise.

Anna Maria highlights: "Oracle's strong local partner presence in Switzerland ensures smooth operations, allowing Sunrise to scale, stay agile, and focus on delivering a great customer experience."

The transition process has been designed to minimise disruption to Sunrise's existing operations while maximising the benefits of the new technology implementation. "Oracle's deep understanding of telco industry challenges and tailored solutions support Sunrise in modernising their IT landscape," Billy explains.

He notes that the hybrid approach offered by Exadata Cloud@Customer gives Sunrise important strategic flexibility for the future. "Exadata Cloud@Customer's hybrid approach optimises operations today while maintaining flexibility to scale into the public cloud," Billy adds.

Learn more

Sunrise delivers the highest gigabit coverage in Switzerland

Recent upgrades in partnership with Amdocs demonstrate this approach in practice. “The key focus areas of this collaboration are customer experience and automation. For example, we recently consolidated our network inventory by expanding our Amdocs stack to support our provisioning automation together with our focus on order management,” says Anna Maria.

“Our collaboration with Amdocs has enabled us to deliver innovative solutions that enhance customer satisfaction and drive operational efficiency. This partnership is a testament to how shared expertise and vision can create impactful results.”

The partnership is also exploring new frontiers in AI. “A new focus area will be CRM and product catalogue where Gen AI is re-inventing the way companies interact with business support systems: in the future the system could for example propose adjustments to products based on various data points,” Anna Maria explains.

The company has decomposed monolithic applications into microservices – smaller, independent software components that can be scaled individually. This architectural shift enables more efficient resource utilisation and improved fault isolation.

Enterprise AI implementation: Building future-ready systems

To coordinate AI initiatives across the organisation, Sunrise has established an AI community of practice under Anna Maria’s oversight which focuses on three primary areas: customer care and sales assistance,

> **“Digital transformation is central to any business strategy today, with organisations adopting cloud, AI, automation, and advanced analytics to drive efficiency, innovation, and customer engagement”**
>
> ANNA MARIA BLENGINO,
> CIO,
> SUNRISE

Sunrise maintains data within its data centres while accessing cloud computing capabilities

network operations and employee productivity tools.

"As with any new emerging trend, initially a lot of pioneers in Sunrise started to experiment with AI independently," says Anna Maria. "To share our experiences and to organise our next joint steps forward, we have created an AI community of practice, governed by the CIO unit but with the contribution of all business units."

The company evaluates AI initiatives through a structured process. "Many use cases are in progress, at different maturity stages. Thanks to a constant feedback loop – and clear acceptance criteria – we are able to recognise the ones which need to be terminated because they did not prove valueable and the ones with high potential which should be scaled up," she explains.

Innovation extends beyond AI to include comprehensive digital transformation initiatives. Providing a "Superior Digital Customer Experience" forms a key pillar of

> **“Technology in the telecom industry is moving toward a future of hyper-connectivity, real-time responsiveness and intelligent automation”**
>
> ANNA MARIA BLENGINO,
> CIO,
> SUNRISE

Sunrise’s transformation, and it includes comprehensive self-service options tailored to digital-native customers. Sunrise has implemented AI systems across its customer service operations. These include AI-powered chatbots for handling routine inquiries and virtual assistants that support call centre and retail staff with customer interactions.

Ultimately, the company aims to provide a seamless omnichannel experience. “Whether a customer starts a conversation via a chatbot and then calls customer support, or moves from online to in-store, all interactions are integrated and personalised,” says Anna Maria.

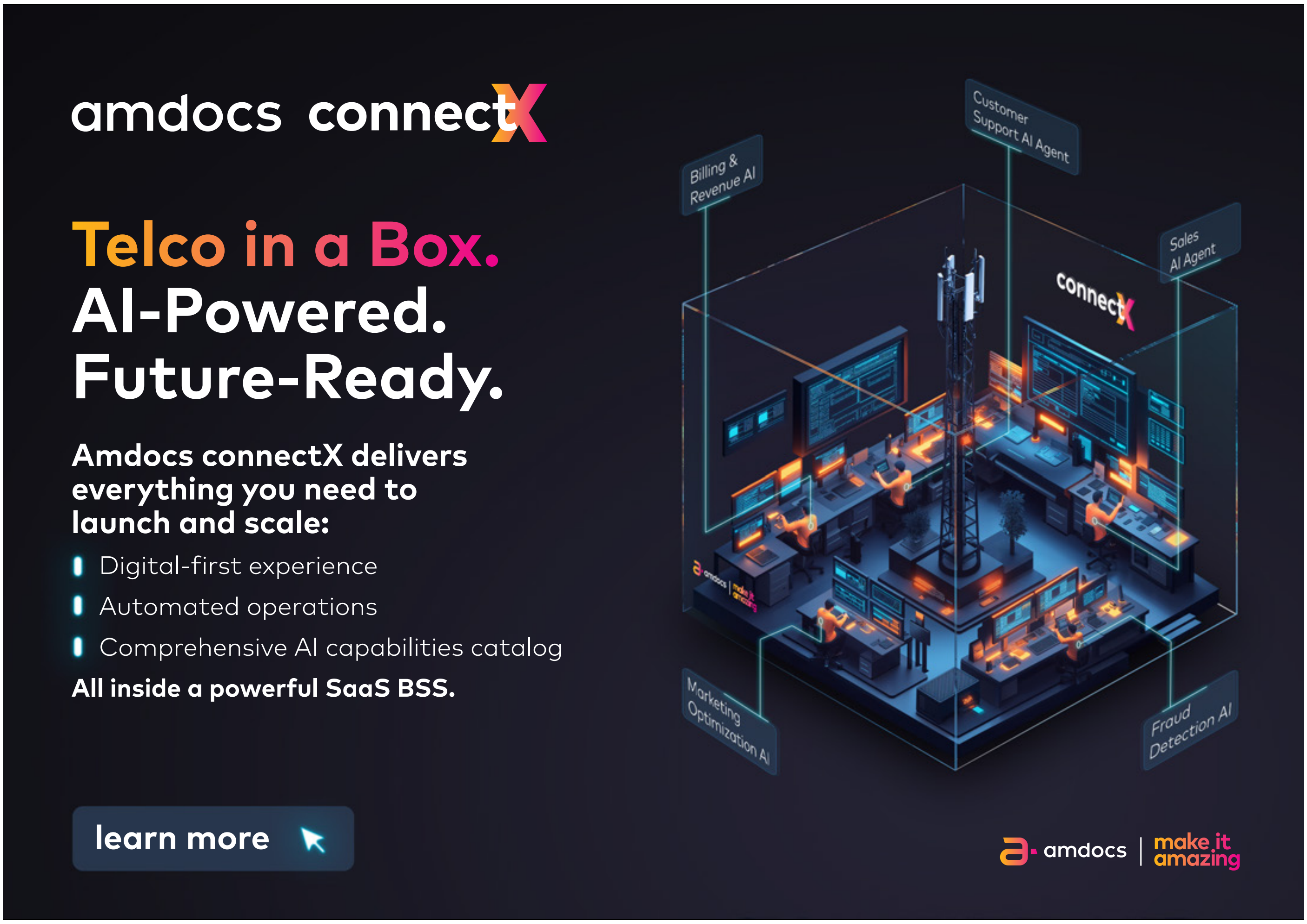
Strategic technology partnerships

Sunrise maintains strategic partnerships with technology providers and is also developing what Anna Maria describes as “Scalable Partnerships and Go-To-Market Strategies in New Revenue Areas,” utilising a ‘Plug and Play’ approach for streamlined partner integration. One of the company’s main partners is the Indian IT services firm Infosys. As Anna Maria describes, this partnership extends beyond traditional vendor arrangements to include joint innovation initiatives.

“Our technology partners play an important role in our pursuit of excellence and therefore our partnership approach is a strategic matter governed at executive level,” she explains. “Starting from a transactional vendor approach, Infosys and Sunrise have jointly become much more business outcome driven, with mutual trust and long-term partnership defining the relationship.

It is a journey that needs continuous nurturing and alignment."

The partnership's scope has expanded significantly since its inception. "From executing the IT transformation required by the Sunrise-UPC merger in 2021, to defining the new microservices based IT architecture, we have collaborated closely in many areas," Anna Maria explains. "We have launched a new digital engagement platform, revamped our customer order management solution and successfully migrated customers from old to new stack."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Sunrise: Digital Transformation Powers Swiss Telco's Future

Today, Infosys plays a central role in Sunrise's IT landscape. "Infosys is responsible for most of the design, build and run of the IT landscape, in a hybrid model where the internal Sunrise team fully retains the strategic lead and know-how to mitigate any sourcing risk," she notes.

To strengthen this collaborative approach, Sunrise has implemented several innovative practices. "We often conduct design thinking workshops, or encourage flip-shoring, where we assign key people from my team to Infosys development centres in India to run development activities together," says Anna Maria.

"All this helps create a feeling of common goals, teamwork and cultural alignment."

Looking ahead, AI is set to form a key component in the partnership's evolution. "I am excited about the possibilities that AI is set to unleash across the areas that we partner with Infosys. I believe that AI is going to be the X-factor in the digital transformation journey of Sunrise," Anna Maria explains.

This focus on AI was highlighted at a recent AIOpenDay event at Sunrise, where technology partners shared ideas and AI use cases.

Anna Maria adds: "One of my takeaways from the session was that AI will have a key influence in critical areas of internal operations, customer care, sales, cybersecurity and network investments.

"I envision Sunrise leveraging AI pervasively across constituents of our ecosystem. We want to facilitate the lives of our employees and our customers with the introduction of these emerging technologies."

> **“Our technology partners play a key role in our pursuit of excellence... I expect delivery ownership, accountability and transparency”**
>
> **ANNA MARIA BLENGINO,**
> CIO,
> SUNRISE

Future direction

Developments in 5G networks are enabling next-generation applications such as autonomous vehicles, smart cities and Industrial IoT implementations, with Switzerland’s position as a hub for innovation and finance making it an ideal testing ground for these technologies.

“Technology in the telecom industry is moving toward a future of hyper-connectivity, real-time responsiveness and intelligent automation,” notes Anna Maria. These advances are already visible in several pilot projects, where 5G infrastructure supports everything from connectivity to self-driving vehicles and automated industrial systems.

As more use cases emerge, the telecom sector is increasingly collaborating with other industries. “The telecom sector is increasingly collaborating with other industries such as automotive, healthcare, and manufacturing to create new revenue streams and enable innovative services, such as connected cars, remote healthcare and smart factories and cities,” Anna Maria explains.

As networks become more complex and interconnected, cybersecurity has emerged as a critical challenge. The rise of IoT devices, cloud services, and connectivity based applications has expanded the potential attack surface for cyber threats.

“With the proliferation of connected devices and critical infrastructure relying on telecom networks, cybersecurity is the mission critical: advanced threat detection and response systems, leveraging AI and machine learning, are key areas of focus,” says Anna Maria.

For Switzerland’s second-largest telecommunications provider, the future lies in balancing innovation with the reliability that Swiss customers expect. “Sunrise is committed to continue its focus on delivering exceptional quality and great services at the right cost,” Anna Maria concludes. “The new offers around digital services will mean that our customers will have even more options and services at their fingertips.”

KEVLINX
DATA CENTERS

AI-READY DATA CENTRES FOR EUROPE'S EMERGING MARKETS

WRITTEN BY:
MAYA DERRICK

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS VAUGHAN

Kevlinx Data Centers executives share how they are designing, building and operating AI-ready, sustainable data centres across Europe's emerging digital hubs

Kevlinx Data Centers is a new entrant in the European data centre space – blending cutting-edge technology, sustainability and AI-readiness in emerging markets across high-potential growth regions.

Targeting Tier 2 and Tier 3 markets, Kevlinx is closing key infrastructure gaps in Europe's digital ecosystem. With BRU01 – its first 32MW+ facility – set to open in Brussels later this year, Kevlinx is positioning itself to meet the evolving computing needs of modern enterprises while driving sustainability in a fast-moving sector.

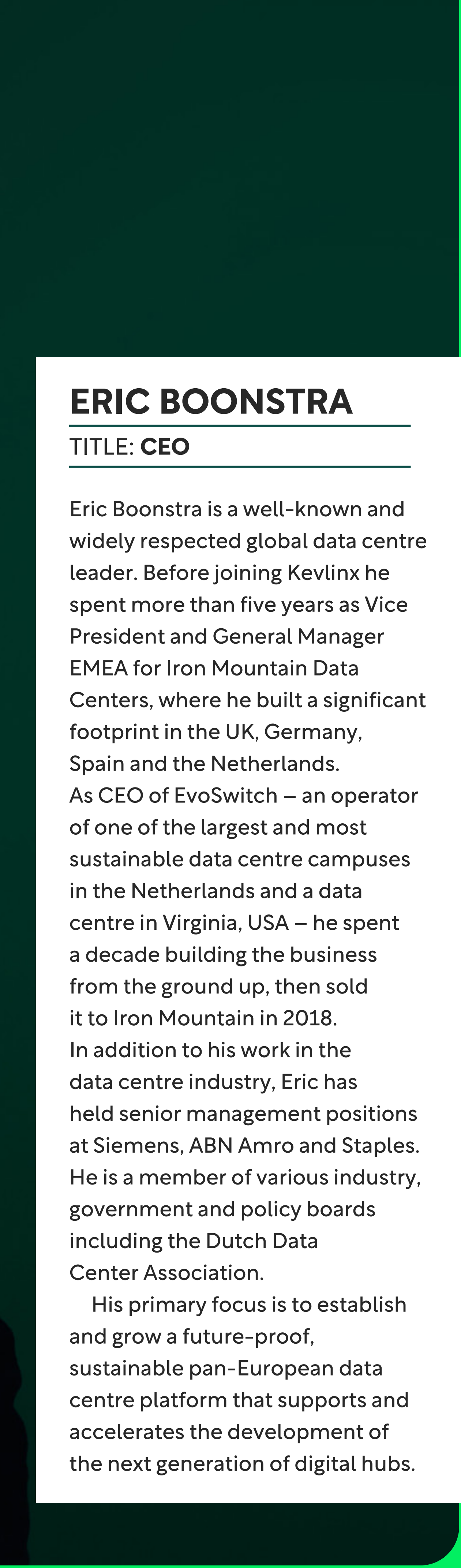
"We are looking at Europe's emerging markets so we can build a scalable data centre platform," says CEO Eric Boonstra. "The first phase of our 32MW+ data centre in Brussels will open in Q4 this year."

COO Eric Lisica adds: "Starting from scratch gives us a significant advantage. We're not tied to legacy design and infrastructure. We can build around the latest customer needs – deploying state-of-the-art technologies, systems and sustainable practices from day one."

Introducing Kevlinx Data Centers

Kevlinx builds for a wide range of customers – from enterprises and

Eric Boonstra,
CEO,
Kevlinx



ERIC BOONSTRA

TITLE: **CEO**

Eric Boonstra is a well-known and widely respected global data centre leader. Before joining Kevlinx he spent more than five years as Vice President and General Manager EMEA for Iron Mountain Data Centers, where he built a significant footprint in the UK, Germany, Spain and the Netherlands.
As CEO of EvoSwitch – an operator of one of the largest and most sustainable data centre campuses in the Netherlands and a data centre in Virginia, USA – he spent a decade building the business from the ground up, then sold it to Iron Mountain in 2018.
In addition to his work in the data centre industry, Eric has held senior management positions at Siemens, ABN Amro and Staples. He is a member of various industry, government and policy boards including the Dutch Data Center Association.

His primary focus is to establish and grow a future-proof, sustainable pan-European data centre platform that supports and accelerates the development of the next generation of digital hubs.

> **“We have all the expertise in-house to deliver a powerful product that serves every market we’re targeting”**
>
> **ERIC BOONSTRA,**
> CEO,
> KEVLINX

governments to hyperscale and AI-driven organisations. Designed with flexibility and grounded in sustainability, Kevlinx integrates high-capacity power delivery and advanced liquid cooling, making it ideal for high-density AI workloads.

“For us, scaling from 1MW to 6MW in a single data hall is no issue,” says Eric Lisica. “This is critical in today’s AI-driven landscape, where speed and density are key.”

Flexibility and sustainability are at the core of Kevlinx’s design and construction philosophy. This ensures the company can continue to meet the ever-evolving demands of the market and support the diverse needs of its customers.

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"We may be a new company, but we have a wealth of experience," adds Eric Boonstra. "Nearly everyone on our team – from design to engineering, operations to commercial – brings deep industry knowledge, including experience of working with hyperscalers and large enterprises.

"We have all the expertise in-house to deliver a powerful product that serves every market we're targeting."

Take Kevlinx's Brussels facility as an example. It's built around the latest technology in centralised, medium-voltage UPS. The power system not only provides best-in-class for efficiency at full and partial load, but is also highly robust and resilient, making it ideal for GPU workloads and the associated power profile. For flexibility, the central UPS block allows for critical power to be configured, scaled and distributed efficiently across the site. This flexibility is crucial as power requirements for IT continue to evolve. The facility is also prepared for liquid cooling including direct-to-chip – a more sustainable and efficient approach compared to traditional air-cooled systems. By leveraging all efficiency gains across the medium-voltage UPS, liquid-cooling, free-cooling potential, facility water temperatures and high utilisation rates, the facility is raising the bar.

> “We’re building our first facility with a group of highly experienced professionals”
>
> **ERIC LISICA,**
> COO,
> KEVLINX

“For us, it doesn’t matter whether we need to deliver 1MW, 2MW or even up to 6MW to a single data hall,” Eric Lisica says. “With AI booming, it’s essential that we can provide customers with precisely the level of power they need.

“That’s what sets us apart. Retrofitting legacy facilities is often time-consuming and costly, while we build for tomorrow’s needs from day one – with sustainability at the core, evidenced by our climate-conscious-by-design approach.”

A key sustainability target for Kevlinx is to measure and track all embedded carbon in its projects from the outset through its use of Lifecycle Carbon Assessments (LCA) – a crucial step in its mission to become carbon neutral by 2030.

All vendors provide Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) where possible, with each EPD giving

ERIC LISICA

TITLE: **COO**

Eric Lisica is one of Europe’s most innovative and experienced experts in customer-focused sustainable data centre design, operations and management, with a track record in hosting, data centres and telecommunications that goes back to the 1990s. Working with Eric Boonstra, he built up the EvoSwitch business in the Netherlands and US as Director Operations. He then went on to direct operations across the Iron Mountain Data Centers footprint in Europe when they acquired EvoSwitch in 2018. Before EvoSwitch, he held senior operational roles with, among others, PSINet, Interoute and Verizon Terremark.

As COO, Eric’s main focus is on the smooth and standards-driven sustainable build and operation of the Kevlinx data centre platform in Europe, including the quality of construction and a comprehensive third-party compliance programme.

Eric Lisica,
COO,
Kevlinx

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transparent, verified information about the environmental impact of the product throughout its lifecycle – from raw material extraction to end-of-life of every product used in the infrastructure.

Brussels: A rising data centre hub

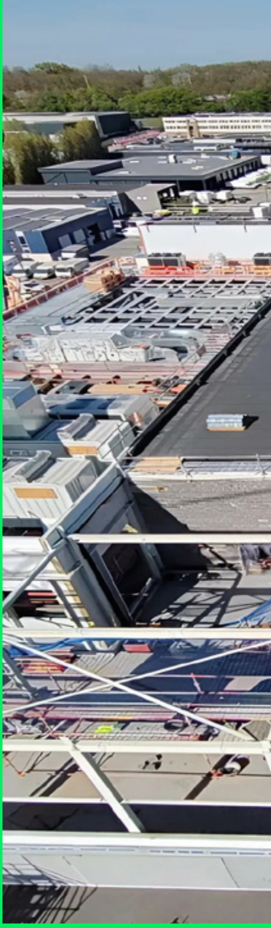
Brussels is emerging as a significant data centre hub in Europe thanks to its secure, central EU location. As well as this, its low-latency connectivity to key markets and direct access to major internet exchanges makes it the perfect home for Kevlinx's first facility.

Although the market is strong in data centre hubs like London, Amsterdam, Frankfurt and Paris, growing demand will mean emerging locations like Brussels will play a key role.

"It is a changing market with a natural growth into new European regions," Eric Boonstra shares. "We need to keep building new data centres and there are many markets with strong potential – like Spain and Italy. These are locations we're looking at as well.

"Brussels is perfectly situated in the heart of FLAPD – Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam, Paris and Dublin – with no major limitations around land, power or latency. It's a prime location and one we believe will become a key data centre market."

Once completed, BRU01 will be the flagship colocation data centre in Belgium – located right in the heart of the city, near the European Union headquarters and the offices of the Brussels regional government.



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Architecture that surprises

Starting by listening to the client, we create architecture to tell a story with location, history, materials and users as speaking characters.

DISCOVER OUR PROJECTS →

> “We may be a new company, but we have a wealth of experience”
>
> **ERIC BOONSTRA,**
> CEO,
> KEVLINX

“We’ve seen Microsoft launch cloud services in Belgium and Google has a major site in the south,” Eric Boonstra adds. “We welcome these developments, it confirms the market is growing – and that can only be a good thing.”

So, what makes Kevlinx different in the Belgian data centre landscape?

In addition to the strong customer pipeline for BRU01, Kevlinx’s facility boasts an abundance of space and power capacity – a clear advantage in an increasingly power-constrained industry.

“Kevlinx offers both large-scale air-cooled infrastructure and advanced liquid cooling capabilities – giving customers the freedom to choose the right density for their workloads,” Eric Boonstra says. “This combination of flexibility and scale sets us apart, enabling us to support higher-density deployments than many of our competitors.

“We have a real advantage here. We know the markets we’re targeting and we have the technology and infrastructure to deliver.”

Partners key to Kevlinx’s success

Kevlinx’s early success can be credited to the combined experience of its seasoned team and the strong relationships it has built across the industry.

“We’re fortunate to have outstanding partners for our Brussels project on both the engineering and architectural sides,” Eric Lisica says. “We have Royal HaskoningDHV as our lead engineer and DBV Architects supporting us.

On the supply side, we're working with a joint venture between Besix and Equans, which serves as our main contractor.

"In terms of technology, ABB is providing our Medium Voltage UPS – a vital component of our infrastructure.

"Our entire supply chain is experienced, reliable and absolutely critical to our progress in Brussels."

Eric Lisica firmly believes that Kevlinx's journey would not have come this far without its network of trusted partners.

"We're building our first facility with a group of highly experienced professionals," he explains. "But when you look at how many people are involved in making this Brussels project a reality, it's around 160 people onsite.

"There's a massive reliance on contractors and partners – for the right knowledge, the right expertise, the right skills and the right technology. You simply can't do it all alone. That's why choosing the right companies is essential."

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Eric Boonstra echoes the importance of these relationships in today's challenging supply environment: "Our supply chain is key. Across the industry, it's becoming increasingly difficult to source equipment, with lead times getting longer. That's where our partners really shine – helping us maintain consistency and standardisation, so we can secure the parts we need, when we need them."

As a young company in a fast-growing market, Kevlinx sees its partner ecosystem not just as support – but as a cornerstone of its long-term growth.

"Different partners come in at different phases of our development," Eric Lisica adds. "If our next deployment is in for example Italy or Spain, we'll be looking for local partners with global knowledge who can join us on the next leg of the journey. The search for great partners doesn't end with this project – it's just the beginning."

An exciting future for Kevlinx

At a time when technology requirements are evolving at lightning speed, both Erics are looking confidently ahead – envisioning what lies in store for Kevlinx, its customers and its partners.

The company is focused on expanding its data centre footprint across Europe while continuing to strengthen its position in Brussels. The most immediate milestone is bringing BRU01 online – a major step forward and just the beginning of a broader growth journey.

“The next 12 to 18 months are important for us,” says Eric Lisica. “We will be ready for service Q4 this year 2025, so my focus for Brussels is shifting from design and construction to operations – making sure we have the right team in place before we go live.

“We want to ensure our customers receive best-in-class functionality from day one. A lot of things are already in motion and they all need to come together before we welcome our first customer into the Brussels facility.”

Eric Boonstra concludes: “Our growth journey is backed by secure funding and strong investor support. With the right team, a future-proof design and the trust of our partners, Kevlinx is well positioned to scale into new markets and continue delivering data centres built for tomorrow.”

Su

The Age of Experience:

How AI is upercharging CX

We explore why adopting AI as a critical enabler of personalised, scalable and proactive customer experiences is a strategic imperative

WRITTEN BY: MATT HIGH

"You are caller number five, please wait on the line". There was a time when most of us, albeit grudgingly, accepted this as the best customer experience (CX) the biggest companies could offer. Then, engagement between businesses and their customers was reactive, characterised by slower response times, no personalisation and inefficient problem resolution.

But this no longer passes muster. Customer expectations have shifted enormously in recent years, driven by the proliferation of digital platforms and channels, the way Amazon and others have transformed consumer habits, and the convenience and 'want-it-now' world that AI has created.

In short, today's customers expect more: real-time and intelligent engagement, callback options, consistent and integrated experiences across multiple channels, and tailored or personalised experiences.

For companies operating in an increasingly competitive environment, this matters. According to a Deloitte Digital study on personalisation, nearly 70% of consumers are more likely to purchase from a brand that personalises experiences.

Salesforce research finds that, for 91% of business buyers and 86% of consumers, the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services. It also reveals that 73%

NICOLAS MAECHLER

TITLE: SENIOR PARTNER

COMPANY: MCKINSEY & COMPANY

INDUSTRY: TELECOMS, MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

Nicolas has more than 26 years' experience at McKinsey, where he specialises in customer experience improvement issues with telecoms, media and tech clients.

of customers expect companies to understand their unique needs and expectations, and that 62% prefer personalised product recommendations.

The rise of AI-powered engagement

Manual or human-only service models aren't sufficient to deliver on these expectations at scale. Rather, embracing AI to optimise customer experience, especially at enterprise scale, is now a strategic imperative for all businesses.

"As customer expectations continue to rise, adopting AI is essential for long-term success, helping organisations stay agile, competitive and consistently ahead of evolving demands," says Matt Trickett, EMEA XM Strategist at experience management firm Qualtrics.

"AI transforms customer interactions by harnessing large volumes of data to deliver more personalised, proactive and efficient experiences. From intelligent agents offering round-the-clock support, to advanced tools that can identify and resolve issues in real time, AI improves product quality, enables deeper personalisation and supports more empathetic engagement."

There's also a business case for adopting an AI-first approach to CX. Earlier this year, Qualtrics published a report on leaders using AI to turbocharge customer engagement. It found that doing so could reap an estimated US$860bn in annual revenue and cost savings, particularly for businesses in sectors such as professional services, consumer retail and retail banking.

> **"Companies that deliver the right experience at the right moment, understand not just what customers want, but when and how to engage"**
>
> **NICOLAS MAECHLER,**
> SENIOR PARTNER,
> MCKINSEY

"By using AI to tap into individual behaviours and sentiment insights, organisations can deliver targeted interactions that make customers feel understood and valued," says Matt. "This not only reduces friction but also improves customer retention and lifetime value, as people are more likely to engage with and advocate for brands that understand them."

McKinsey says that AI-powered personalisation can boost revenues for businesses by 10%-15%, and that companies that prioritise customer experience have a significant competitive advantage over their competitors.

"Today's customers expect more than quality," says Nicolas Maechler, Senior Partner at the global consulting firm. "But true customer-centricity isn't about chasing every whim, it's about balancing customer needs with a long-term vision.

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AI-powered personalisation boosts business revenues by 10%-15%, says McKinsey. Pictured: McKinsey's Ecuador HQ

"Companies that deliver the right experience at the right moment, understand not just what customers want, but when and how to engage," he adds. "How? By embedding insights into every decision, ensuring products, services and experiences align with what customers truly value. This creates the 'next best experience' that keeps them coming back for more."

Maximising business value

This AI-led transformation is already well underway. Businesses worldwide are using AI to reshape richer and more rewarding customer journeys. Netflix, for example, employs AI algorithms to analyse user viewing patterns and preferences, enabling highly personalised content recommendations that have helped retain subscribers and increase usage times.

Another example is Starbucks, which has integrated AI into its mobile app to offer customers personalised order suggestions. Known as Deep Brew, this sits at the heart of the app, which is used by more than 17 million people. It analyses data to understand store performance, where customers like to drink, and things like weather conditions and time of day to recommend tailored food and drink.

QUALTRICS: KEY ACTIONS TO REALISE THE VALUE OF AI IN CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE:

- Set AI ambition and value strategy to decide where to invest in AI.
- Establish risk and ethics guidelines for responsible and compliant AI use.
- Create the technology and data foundation to evolve and grow with AI technology.
- Design AI organisation and governance teams to oversee company-wide implementation.
- Launch high-impact priority use cases to build momentum for expanded implementation.
- Develop the talent strategy with employee training.
- Lead the cultural shift of embracing AI as a core enabler of customer experience.

Other benefits of using AI in CX include consistency of brand message and interaction across channels – according to a study by Zendesk, 73% of customers want to be able to start conversations on one channel and continue on another. It also improves operational efficiency as a result of streamlined processes from chatbot and virtual agents capable of handling thousands of simultaneous queries with consistent accuracy, and improved customer retention.

Verizon's use of Google's Gemini AI to assist its contact centre agents demonstrates how effective these gains can be. The company uses AI to access approximately 15,000 internal documents to provide real-time assistance during customer interactions. Since its full deployment at the start of 2025, Verizon has reported a nearly 40% increase in sales.

According to Qualtrics' research, businesses can add the most value from AI across three primary areas. Increased productivity, such as by automating routine tasks, contributes an estimated US$420 billion, accelerated topline growth adds US$260 billion, and streamlined processes, such as automatically solving customer issues, saves organisations US$180 billion annually.

"Integrating AI and specialised agents into the customer experience process boosts productivity by automating tasks such as call routing, post-call documentation, and real-time data analysis," says Matt. "This allows human agents to focus on more strategic, high-value interactions while providing valuable insights through natural language processing and behavioural analytics.

"Also, it can create a seamless, omnichannel experience that aligns with customer expectations. These factors together drive operational efficiencies and support long-term strategic growth

MATT TRICKETT

TITLE: EMEA XM STRATEGIST

COMPANY: QUALTRICS

INDUSTRY: TECHNOLOGY

Matt is an experienced customer experience professional at Qualtrics, the world's leading experience management technology company. He has 10 years' experience in implementing, building and running over 100 CX programmes.

by allowing organisations to adapt more quickly and intelligently to changing market demands".

The AI-engagement paradox

Despite the compelling business case, both Qualtrics and McKinsey note a hesitance on the part of large organisations to lead the way.

Qualtrics found that, while three-quarters (72%) of executives say AI will significantly change how they approach CX over the next three years, only 15% of executives aspire to be at the forefront of how the technology changes the business landscape.

"The gap between intention and impact is stark," Nicolas adds. Leaders value customer-centricity but stumble on execution. Why? A lack of vision, siloed teams, outdated systems, weak processes, and clashing priorities block progress.

According to McKinsey, leaders should harness AI to drive 'experience-led growth', a distinctive and direct CX strategy focused on consistency, redesigned customer journeys, products and services, and a transformative mindset.

"It's not about sacrificing quality – it's about evolving," Nicolas explains. "By leveraging AI-powered tools like predictive analytics, chatbots and other methods like A/B testing and real-time engagement loops, businesses can decode behavioural patterns and purchasing history. The result is hyper-personalised experiences, delivered with precision at the right moment, driving customer loyalty."

Qualtrics' research shows that organisations investing in CX are already gaining market share that could prove significant. Market leaders – organisations identified as gaining market share – are more than twice as likely to have focused on improving experiences over the past three years compared to peers.

Qualtrics shows investment in CX is already driving business success. Pictured: Qualtrics' Utah facility

“AI transforms customer interactions by harnessing large volumes of data to deliver more personalised, proactive and efficient experiences”

MATT TRICKETT,
EMEA XM STRATEGIST,
QUALTRICS

Hyper-personalising business engagement

“Integrating AI into customer service channels requires a clear strategy to be successful,” Matt explains. “Navigating siloed data, striking the right balance between automation and human interaction, and managing organisational change are all key challenges.

“Successfully implementing AI requires a thoughtful, cross-departmental approach, guided by centralised

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AI revolution – how
Qualtrics is transforming
customer experience

leadership and aligned with overall business strategy. New technologies must integrate seamlessly with existing solutions to create a unified customer view. To fully realise the benefits, organisations will need to have a comprehensive AI transformation strategy in place, with leadership support and a focus on long-term impact and value."

Based on its report research, Qualtrics identifies several key actions organisations should take. These include setting AI ambition and a dedicated value strategy, creating a technology and data foundation that enables growth, establishing risk and ethics guidelines and leading the cultural shift of embracing AI as a core enabler of CX.

"The best leaders put growth front and centre, taking bold risks and breaking free from outdated norms," says Nicolas. "They don't just hear customer feedback, they act on it, aligning company culture with customer expectations. They invest in talent, equip teams with the right tools and build agile, customer-focused operating models. Most importantly, they turn customer centric ambition into action and witness profitable growth.

"In the future, success will belong to companies that go beyond collecting feedback – they'll embed insights into every strategy. By leveraging AI, acting swiftly and staying anchored to a long-term vision, they'll align customer experiences with measurable business outcomes. This transforms passive data into meaningful, resonant experiences, making customer-centricity a true growth engine." ○

How **Digital Transf** Empowering Pepsi

PEPSICO

formation is Co’s Procurement

WRITTEN BY:
AARON
MCMILLAN

PRODUCED BY:
JAMES
WHITE

PepsiCo's procurement team is harnessing the latest digital tools to drive innovation and sustainability, helping the business achieve its goals

No one can argue the profound impact digital tools are having on procurement, allowing organisations big and small to gain competitive advantage. Perhaps this cutting-edge tech is more vital to large enterprises like PepsiCo, whose net revenue stands at US$92bn.

With an employee base of approximately 318,000 and a portfolio of products, including Lays, Doritos, Pepsi Cola and Mountain Dew, enjoyed a billion times every day, PepsiCo needs a procurement function at the very top of its game.

As PepsiCo looks to unlock efficiency across the board, procurement's focus is on aligning with the wider company vision and, with that, two key pillars.

The first concerns strategic supplier partnerships – in other words, trying to negotiate better terms and achieve savings, but also long-term partnerships that drive innovation.

The second is a strong prioritisation of sustainable solutions. PepsiCo's procurement professionals are constantly looking for new ways to make good on the organisation's PepsiCo Positive (pep+) environmental efforts, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions, becoming net water positive and reducing the use of virgin plastic.

AI: Reshaping PepsiCo's procurement

At the very heart of PepsiCo's procurement efforts is Lauren Hymen, VP, Strategy and Transformation.

She stresses that AI is "here to stay" and highlights the rapid rate at which the company has expanded its use, with a particular focus on spend analytics. AI is used to process vast amounts of unstructured data, enhancing spend visibility. Advanced sourcing and risk management are other areas where the technology is being applied.

"Those are the three areas we're playing with right now," Lauren adds.

"I'm personally observing AI's role growing in a few other areas that we're looking at: category management, supplier relationship management, negotiation and what I'm seeing across the board are these broader orchestration capabilities.

"I believe we haven't fully unlocked AI's potential in this domain. We've made great strides in leveraging AI, but there's still so much more potential to unlock. At PepsiCo, we're continuously exploring and refining how AI can drive meaningful impact while ensuring it aligns with our broader business goals".

Aligning with business goals

Procurement is often at the very forefront when it comes to delivering business goals, particularly in the realm of cost cutting.

"Everyone looks at procurement to help make sure that we're driving cost reduction so we can reinvest in the business," Lauren continues.

"I think everyone sees procurement like that and our procurement organisation does a fantastic job."

"A big passion point is building these larger strategic relationships so that we can go beyond costs and really innovate. Last year, as an example, we led our first supplier Innovate Together, which helped elevate and bring to life some of

LAUREN HYMEN

TITLE: **VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION AT PEPSICO**

Lauren Hymen is a dynamic and high-energy leader with a distinguished career in strategic planning, process redesign, project execution, continuous improvement, change management and post-merger integration.

Currently serving as the Vice President of S&T Digital Procurement at PepsiCo, Lauren has a proven track record of driving significant improvements and innovations across various industries. Her illustrious career journey includes leadership roles at Accenture, Coty and Newell Brands, where she led global projects, integrated systems and managed cross-functional teams.

Lauren holds a Bachelor of Science in Industrial Engineering from Northwestern University and an MBA from New York University.

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Lauren Hymen,
Vice President,
Strategy and
Transformation,
PepsiCo

SpendHQ

Delivering Global Spend Visibility for PepsiCo

Jose Bustillo, Vice President, Delivery & Procurement Excellence, explains how the platform helps PepsiCo make faster, more informed spending decisions

In today's complex business environment, large organisations struggle to obtain clear visibility into their spend data. This challenge stems from several factors that create barriers to effective procurement intelligence.

Jose Bustillo, Vice President, Delivery & Procurement Excellence at SpendHQ, a spend analytics and performance management software provider, identifies the main obstacles companies face.

"A common obstacle is data silos," says Jose. "The complexity of data structures for different organisations, different departments and different ERP systems makes extracting value from data very complicated."

Beyond siloed information, inconsistent data formats compound the problem: "I've worked with large organisations that use Excel spreadsheets, but then have different regions and different countries using a completely different variation in data entry formats."

Why use spend analytics?

When selecting a spend analytics solution, Jose emphasises several critical capabilities, with integration functionality a primary consideration.

"At SpendHQ, we have more than 40 connectors and integrations with different products, including some of the largest and most used tech products available," he explains.

Advanced analytics capabilities and dashboard flexibility are equally important. These features enable stakeholders to easily access and understand procurement information.

Jose continues: "Solutions like SpendHQ provide data integration capabilities, advanced analytics, flexibility to create dashboards and a user-friendly interface, with a single source of truth to manage project data and spend."

The SpendHQ–PepsiCo partnership

PepsiCo partnered with SpendHQ to address a need for comprehensive spend visibility on a global scale. Crucially, the beverage and snack giant sought a consolidated platform that employees could use with ease.

"SpendHQ unlocks opportunities for cost savings across all regions and categories, but also optimises sourcing strategies and efficiencies within procurement teams," says Jose.

PepsiCo is seeing numerous advantages since implementing SpendHQ's Spend Intelligence solution. Most notably, the company now benefits from comprehensive spend visibility through a single source of truth.

This visibility helps the procurement team make "faster, data-driven decisions by having quick access to insights, spend trends and spend patterns," according to Jose. What previously took weeks now takes minutes, improving productivity and reducing cycle times for identifying risk or cost-saving opportunities. The platform also facilitates better alignment between procurement activities and broader business objectives. Jose notes: "It's easier to align how procurement adds value to the business objectives as a whole."

Lauren Hymen, Vice President for Strategy and Transformation at PepsiCo, calls the partnership with SpendHQ "transformative", adding: "SpendHQ provides us with comprehensive spend visibility on a global scale, allowing procurement associates to access critical data with just a few clicks.

> *"By leveraging SpendHQ's advanced analytics platform, we can identify spending patterns, track expenditures, and unlock opportunities for cost savings across all our procurement categories."*
>
> **Lauren Hymen**
>
> Vice President for Strategy and Transformation at PepsiCo

System integration

As mentioned, SpendHQ's ability to integrate with existing systems provides significant advantages, connecting with multiple ERP systems and other technology providers.

"Having the capability to integrate with multiple systems provides seamless data flow across all systems and reduces manual processing and reporting," Jose explains. This integration capability offers both flexibility and scalability.

"We are built for collaboration and it's critical for companies to look into how seamless data flows work, especially with complex data," Jose concludes. "In the long term, that's going to help close a lot of pain points. It will increase adoption, improve process alignment and bring scalability and flexibility benefits to the organisation as a whole."

Ready to Get Started?

Contact us today to schedule your free consultation and take the first step toward cleaner, more actionable spend data.

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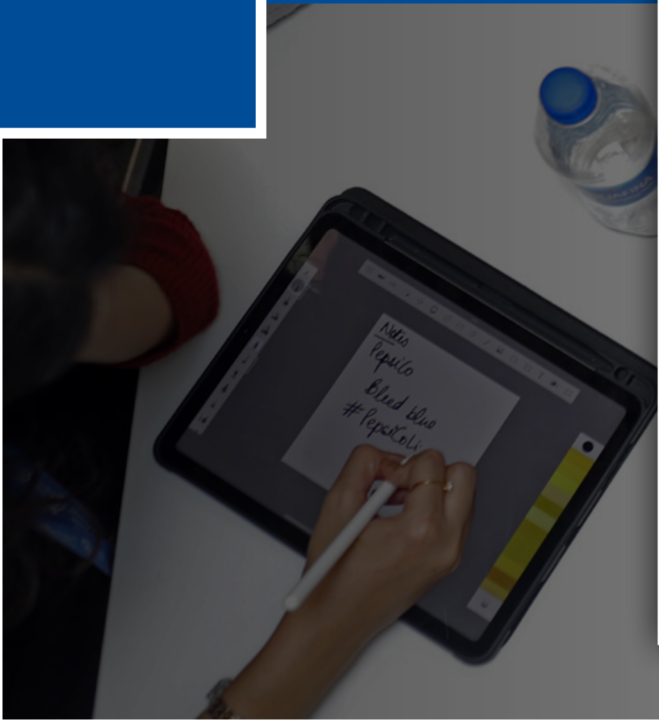
in

> **“I THINK THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS BALANCING RESOURCES AND DETERMINING WHERE TO INVEST”**
>
> **LAUREN HYMEN,**
> VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION,
> PEPSICO



the things we’re seeing with our partners and how we bring that into the business so that we affect not just the bottom line, but the top line as well. It was instrumental in driving innovation in our key areas of focus.”

PepsiCo is always striving for excellence, with many thousands of people building long, successful careers. With that longevity comes both experience and know-how, as well as a desire to succeed.

“Some of my colleagues, they’ve been around a long time, and they’ve helped bring me up to speed on PepsiCo business. This balance of sharing the past and willingness to listen to new ideas has really allowed me to make a meaningful impact in a short time.” Lauren says.

“It has allowed me to highlight the global procurement impact within our organisation, demonstrating how important procurement is, and then allowing our organisation to invest in the right technologies to hopefully catapult our procurement organisation to the next level. I believe PepsiCo, with technology investments, will make procurement and PepsiCo more efficient.

Navigating challenges in digital transformation

When asked about the most rewarding aspect of her role, Lauren’s answer is immediate and authentic: “I know everyone says it, but the truth is it’s the people I get to work with. I have this unique opportunity to work with the procurement team and see their deep functional expertise.

India Corporate office

“I get to talk to a range of different people and I get to see the latest trends – what’s happening in the procurement digital landscape. So, this part invigorates me as well as allows me to then bring those ideas back to PepsiCo.”

The path to procurement excellence is not without obstacles. Lauren identifies resource allocation as a primary challenge: “I think the biggest challenge – and it’s not unique to PepsiCo – is balancing resources and determining where to invest.

“PepsiCo is very strategic about where it focuses. It’s critical to prioritise those areas that are going to have the biggest impact.”

Change management presents another significant hurdle.

“We’re seeing technology evolve at such a rapid pace,” Lauren observes.

“I want to be part of delivering that tangible impact so that PepsiCo is making the right investments, with procurement bringing those tools into their day-to-day lives so the change is embedded in how we do things.”

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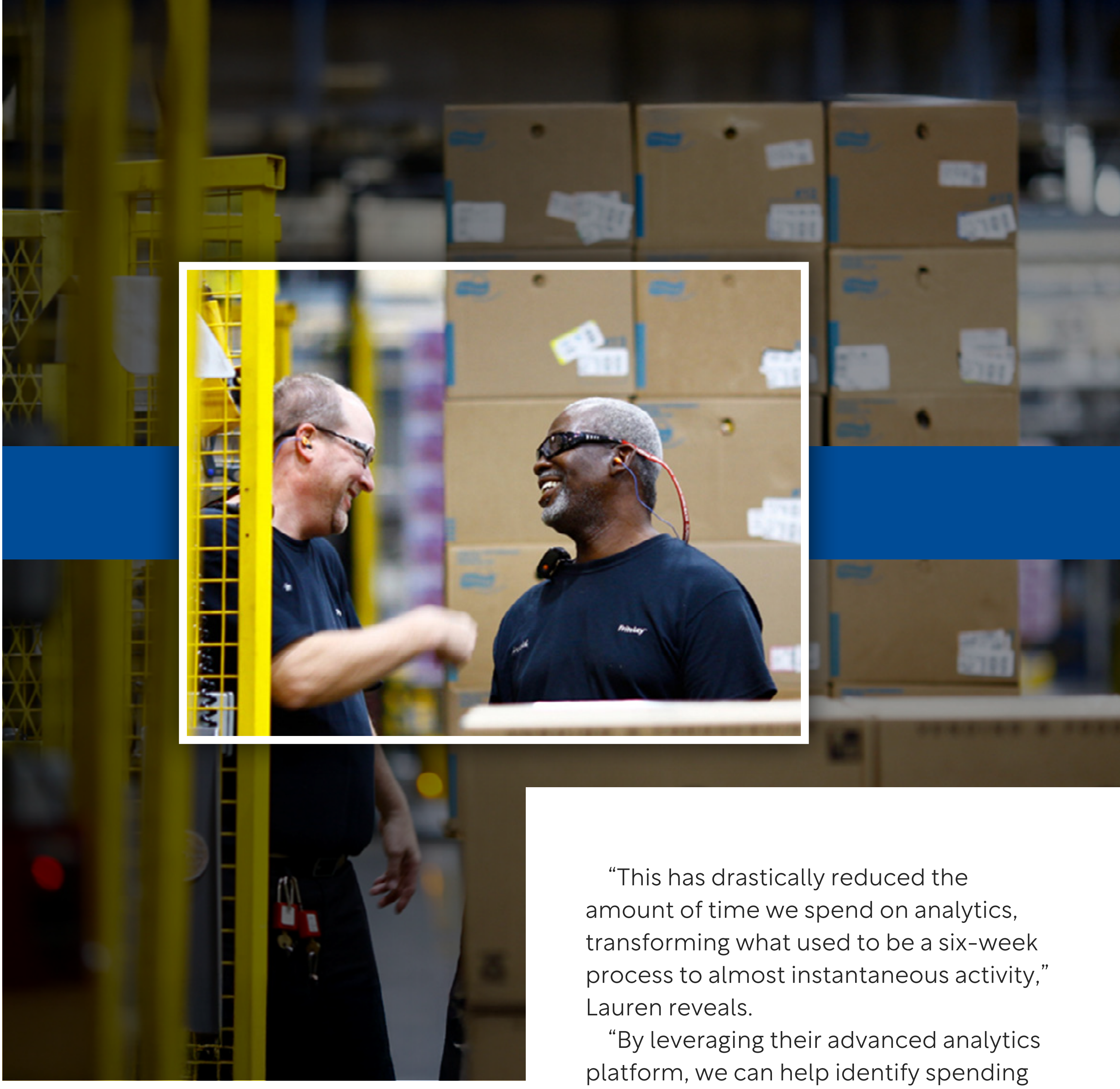

Partnering with SpendHQ

PepsiCo’s ongoing digital transformation serves to highlight the wider, cross-functional digital procurement community – utilised by the organisation to achieve its goals.

One key partner is SpendHQ, which Lauren describes as “transformative for our procurement operations”.

SpendHQ provides PepsiCo with comprehensive spend visibility on a global scale, allowing team members to access critical data with just a few clicks.

“This has drastically reduced the amount of time we spend on analytics, transforming what used to be a six-week process to almost instantaneous activity,” Lauren reveals.

“By leveraging their advanced analytics platform, we can help identify spending patterns, track expenditures and unlock opportunities and cost savings across all of our procurement categories.

“Spend HQ is not only enhancing our decision-making capabilities, but I would say it also optimises our sourcing strategies and maximising value from these supplier partnerships.”

Elsewhere, WNS Smart Cube is focused on engagement in market intelligence to support strategic sourcing activities. Over time, the relationship has evolved into a strategic partnership, delivering real-time market and category insights that drive procurement excellence.

WATCH NOW

How digital transformation is empowering PepsiCo's procurement for sustainability and cost savings

"Building on this strong foundation, last year marked a significant milestone as we expanded our collaboration to develop an in-house should cost modelling capability," Lauren adds.

"This initiative enhances our ability to make data-driven decisions, optimise costs and strengthen supplier negotiations. By leveraging advanced analytics and industry benchmarking, WNS Procurement helps us uncover opportunities for cost savings, value engineering, supplier diversification and improved procurement efficiency.

"With regular reporting, interactive dashboards and customised intelligence solutions, WNS Procurement ensures seamless alignment with PepsiCo Procurement's objectives. This partnership continues to foster a proactive, resilient and future-ready procurement strategy, enabling us to navigate market complexities with agility and confidence."

Achieving results

PepsiCo is focused on leveraging the data at its disposal to make decisions in real time, seeking solutions that

SUSTAINABLE SOURCING AT PEPSICO

PepsiCo's approach to sustainable sourcing is operationalised through:

- **Human Rights Due Diligence Program:** A global programme that engages its most business-critical tier-1 suppliers and includes formal risk assessments, third-party audits, corrective action and capability building.

- **Sustainable Farming Program (SFP):** A farm-level continuous improvement programme that helps it assess direct growers, identify potential gaps relative to its policies, implement plans to safeguard human rights and embed regenerative agricultural practices.

- **Procurement practices:** Where possible, its supply contracts include its Supplier Code of Conduct. In purchasing categories with specific commitments to sustainable sourcing, such as palm oil, procurement teams use tools such as supplier scorecards to evaluate and compare performance of individual suppliers against expectations.

- **Tailored programmes**: In cases where it identifies potentially high risk or priority supply chain concerns, PepsiCo aims to deploy specific programmes to improve knowledge, awareness and outcomes.

> **“A BIG PASSION POINT FOR US IS BUILDING LARGER STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS, SO THAT WE CAN GO BEYOND COSTS AND INNOVATE”**

LAUREN HYMEN,
VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION,
PEPSICO

improve its sourcing strategies and help it to manage costs.

One key example is in supplier risk, as Lauren explains: "It's the same thing when we look at some of the risk tools we're evaluating. We can really see how potential supply risk is going to influence our ability to produce.

"This helps us not only meet consumer needs, but also minimises waste, which goes back to our long-term sustainability goals."

The future of digital procurement

As Lauren looks to the future of procurement, she also reflects on how much the industry has changed over the past 10 years, shifting from a few major players to a US$6bn industry of procuretech solutions.

She believes the industry is consolidating, impacting the role she plays in shaping PepsiCo's operations.

Lauren adds: "My role will be identifying where we want to play and experiment and where we want to establish long-term true partnerships. This will involve strategically selecting technologies that align with our goals, but then also saying, 'where do we want to innovate in this space?'."

Lauren exemplifies how procurement professionals can drive meaningful change – not just in their organisations, but across the broader profession.

By balancing technological innovation with people-focused leadership, she is helping to shape the future of digital procurement with one of the world's most recognised consumer brands.

ABZENA
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HOW BIOTECH LEADER ABZENA US TECHNOLOGY TO M MEDICAL NEEDS

WRITTEN BY:
MAYA DERRICK

PRODUCED BY:
TOM VENTURO

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Dave Williamson, CIO of Abzena, discusses AI, data strategy and how the company stays ahead in biotech, driving impactful solutions for clients

There are plenty of ways pharmaceutical companies are working to accelerate the development process, with innovation and technology propelling discovery and driving impact.

Abzena is a leading end-to-end bioconjugate, ADC and complex biologics CDMO+CRO. From discovery through commercial launch, it supports customers with fully integrated programmes – as well as individual services – designed to de-risk and streamline the development of new treatments for patients in need. Research, development and cGMP happens across its global facilities – San Diego, California and Bristol, Pennsylvania in the US and Cambridge in the UK.

CIO Dave Williamson is at the forefront of Abzena's technological development, leveraging data that is critical to automation, drug discovery and accelerating outcomes.

A chemist by training, Dave's career began with a stint in the US Army, which paid for his university studies – an experience that allowed him to travel the world and "go on many different adventures".

He says: "I've always been fascinated by science, how things work."

> **"When you get really smart people together and they solve problems, they often solve in different ways"**
>
> **DAVE WILLIAMSON,**
> CIO,
> ABZENA

Dave Williamson,
CIO,
Abzena

This prompted his move into the pharmaceutical industry, where he has spent the rest of his career to date. In roles across pharmaceuticals, generics and biotech, Dave has been working at the intersection of technology and healthcare for decades, helping with progressing medicines that benefit those underserved.

Now, as Abzena's CIO, Dave is setting the company's continued technological development in motion, ensuring the biopharma is data smart and delivering results for its clients and those in need.

Abzena's tech journey

Tech and pharma's relationship is nothing new, but is becoming increasingly intertwined to improve patient outcomes and drug discovery.

For Dave, Abzena has never had an issue with having too little data or the right technology to undertake work – however, Abzena has been on a journey to ensure the right, actionable and relevant datasets are available to generate meaningful insights.

"A group of scientists have done quite a lot of work with machine learning, using it to better understand key attributes like stability, screen for antibody liabilities and antibody selection," Dave explains. "They're using this technology to tell you which approach has the most probability to succeed. This cuts the whole development time of getting new therapies and medicines to patients in need sooner. It's our drive – and our clients' drive – to achieve that.

"When you get really smart people together and they solve problems, they often solve in different ways. There's a lot of differing cultures involved, everyone can speak up and that creates innovation. We're not just looking at how we have always done this, we're thinking about new ways to do it and how we can apply these new technologies, tapping into that innate curiosity that you have as a scientist."

This all plays into Abzena's overall data strategy. With now more than a decade of operations behind the team, lots of data has accumulated.

"I'm not even so sure you could easily catalogue all the data we have, but that's one of the huge benefits of technologies

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Abzena’s San Diego facility

> “AI is not going to take jobs. It needs quite a lot of help to be effective, but when it is effective, it’s pretty amazing”
>
> **DAVE WILLIAMSON,**
> CIO,
> ABZENA

like AI and machine learning – we don't have to," Dave says. "It can sift through all of it much, much quicker than people ever could. Using solutions from our partners also helps us connect into these data sources and makes it easier for the experts to connect to the data and then start using it in whatever queries and investigations that they're undertaking."

Abzena partners with Savant Labs and Atomicwork, among others, to enrich its use of technology and ensure processes are as simple and effective as possible.

For example, Savant Labs – a company that uses AI to help analysts automate data access and preparation – provides Abzena with a modern, cloud-based data management platform that provides the agility and accessibility to effectively leverage its data to drive its scientific research and business operations. Savant Labs' ability to connect to various data sources, Dave says, empowers Abzena's experts to easily access, prepare and utilise data in their queries and investigations.

"It enables us to easily connect to data sources, pull that data in, combine it, manipulate it in whichever way we want and then use that to view our analytics or data science AI, ML solutions," Dave details. "It's a cloud-based tool that enables us to connect to diverse data sources that fuels the analytics dashboards."

The lightweight nature of the solution enables real-time adjustments to data connections based on specific needs, unlike traditional methods requiring pre-defined architectures.

DAVE WILLIAMSON

TITLE: **CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER**

COMAPNY: **ABZENA**

LOCATION: **USA**

Dave Williamson is the Chief Information Officer of Abzena. Dave was previously Senior Director of Informatics for Illumina where he was responsible for the data analytics and data science Center of Excellence across Global Quality and Operations.

Prior to joining Illumina, Dave was Director, Information Technology at Biogen, a biotechnology company, where he and his team were responsible for the strategic technology planning, digital transformation initiatives and day-to-day operations for the manufacturing, engineering and quality functions. Dave served as Senior Director of Quality and Operation systems for Nycomed from 2009 until 2011.

Dave currently serves on the Board of Advisors for Technology Executive Club.

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By applying the tool, Abzena has been successful in enabling non-data architecture experts to work effectively with data – fostering agility and addressing historical data silos. It also supports Abzena's cloud-first strategy, promoting agility and scalability while maintaining necessary security and performance.

And with Atomicwork, Abzena is able to leverage its AI-enabled agent for internal support. Driven by executive interest in AI, Abzena found Atomicwork best suited for its specific use cases. It uses the platform as an IT ticketing system with the AI chatbot assisting departments across the business – from HR to finance. It provides quick answers to common employee questions, empowering employees to self-serve, reducing the burden on HR and IT staff.

Atomicwork's flexibility allows departments to independently set up and manage their own workflows, while addressing data privacy concerns.

"It's not only an IT ticketing system but is an AI-enabled agent," Dave shares. "Any group can set up their own workflows that are independent of each other. Data privacy is always a concern, so by deploying Atomicwork and limiting any access to personnel data – we've been very excited by that."

Dave believes by working with other areas of the technology world, Abzena continues to take an innovative

approach. These companies are often innovative themselves in their founding – forming after working with competitors. It's this approach that Dave praises not only as a technology leader but as a customer.

He continues: "These companies have pinpointed things that have frustrated the industry and formed to solve those problems. When you have somebody like myself that can see that and has worked with the legacy tools, you see the difference immediately. It gets you very excited and really grabs your attention."

The impact on pharmaceuticals

By taking an innovative approach to technology, Abzena has not only automated and accelerated the drug discovery process but unlocked agility

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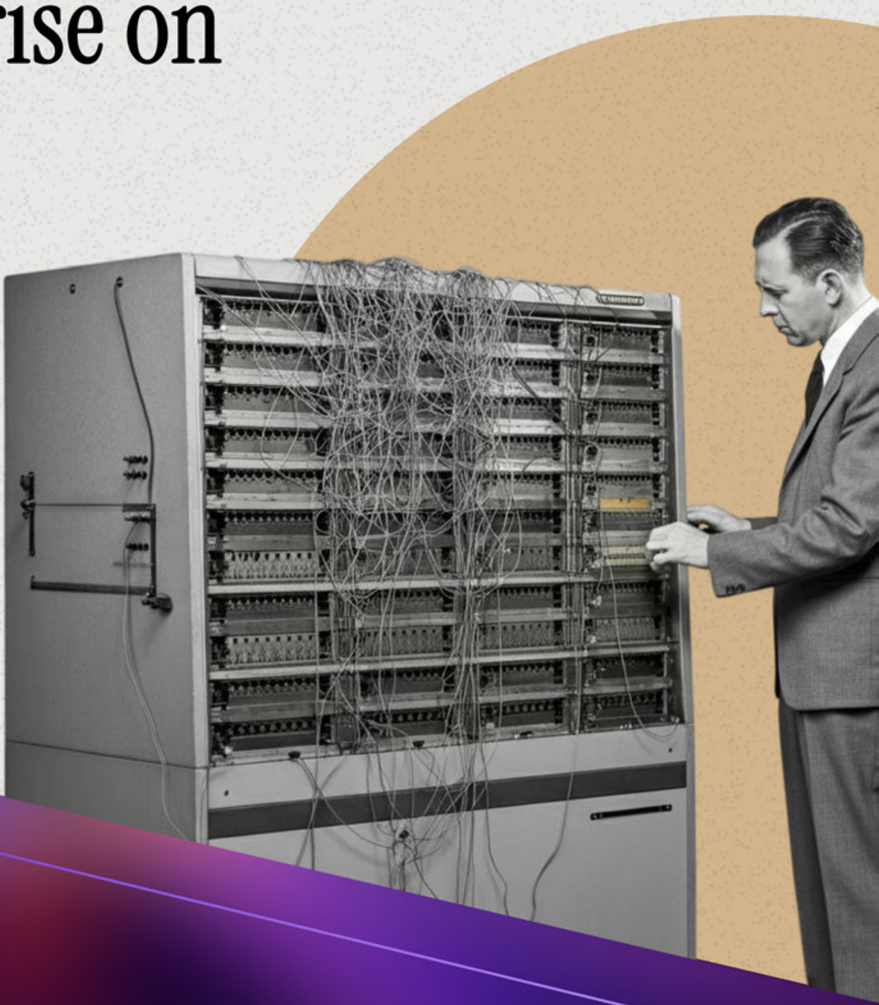

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> **"I've always been fascinated by science, how things work"**
>
> **DAVE WILLIAMSON,**
> CIO,
> ABZENA

and scalability – meaning it can work with firms of all sizes while also ensuring it continues to be data smart.

"Talking about machine learning and scientific development, we're very excited about what's possible," Dave asserts. "This has enabled us to move from a push environment to a pull – allowing us to be proactive and see what else we could do.

"There are a lot of untapped ideas that we could use to help these technologies excel in sifting through large amounts of data – both structured for machine learning and unstructured like documents for Gen AI.

"In my own experience, you often have a very broad idea of what you might be able to achieve with technology. When it comes to scientific developments, more often it's about putting the best answer forward first. Sometimes that counters your own intuition – for example, I could guess based on my experience we should go with answer C, but the technology tells you to try B first instead. This approach allows us to cut waste, cutting the time and resources required to get to the best answer. And, at times, it uncovers things that do not make sense to the expert – and that leads to innovation."

The prospect of continuing on this trajectory and developing these approaches at Abzena is exciting to Dave, looking ahead.

PLATE WASHER
405
BioTek

Abzena's Cambridge facility

Abzena is working to further investment in its own intellectual property as well as its portfolio offerings, taking key challenges like improving yield and stability in its stride to ensure the delivery of value in the shortest possible timeframe.

By continuing to invest in technologies like ML and data science, Dave believes that Abzena will continue its approach leveraging technology to determine the best path to success.

"AI is not going to take jobs," Dave affirms. "It needs quite a lot of help to be effective, but when it is effective, it's pretty amazing." Dave is also quick to reiterate its ability to enhance – and how it will continue to in a way we may not be able to fathom yet.

"It's helping us not only solve today's problems but adapt to solve tomorrow's future problems, too," he adds.

Abzena's future will also centre on expanding its capabilities to better serve its clients and to improve in commercial production. "With patients out in the world waiting on medicines, if we make a mistake then potentially they won't have access to it," Dave concludes. "We're hoping to bring in more scrutiny as there are people who rely on us to be there.

"We are also always looking at growth and helping our clients be successful and move their therapies – so not only helping clients through the drug development clinical stages, but also delivering approved medications in a reliable, consistent fashion to patients globally." ○

Usin to Ta

Aerial image of a controlled burn

CREDIT: GOOGLE

Google:
g AI Satellites
ackle Wildfires

The **Google Research-led FireSat** uses advanced AI and high-res imagery to spot small fires from space

WRITTEN BY: MATT HIGH

FireSat launching
aboard SpaceX rocket

Juliet Rothenberg knows firsthand the fear and uncertainty people experience when facing devastating wildfires. When, four years ago, her California neighbourhood was evacuated she and her family spent the next few hours looking at satellite imagery for reassurance and answers. But none came.

Juliet, who is the Product Director of Climate AI work at Google Research, faced the same challenge as countless researchers, scientists and firefighters: poor data and a critical gap in existing wildfire detection.

Current satellite imagery used for firefighting is only available at low resolution or is updated only a few times each day. This makes it difficult to detect serious fires until they have grown as large as a football field.

“We had no idea if our neighbourhood was safe,” says Juliet. “All we received was updated satellite imagery every 12 hours, while throughout the Bay Area, the sky was red and full of smoke.”

Google Research using AI to prevent devastation

In early March 2025, Juliet stood with her Google Research colleagues at Vandenberg Space Force Base to watch the launch into orbit of a solution designed to tackle this challenge: FireSat.

CREDIT: SPACEX

GOOGLE

HEADQUARTERS: MOUNTAIN VIEW, CALIFORNIA, US

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 183,000 (2024)

MARKET CAP: US$1.74TRN

The result of a partnership with the Earth Fire Alliance, the Gordon & Betty Moore Foundation and Muon Space, FireSat is a purpose-built satellite constellation that uses AI and high-resolution multispectral satellite imagery to provide near real-time insights on wildfires.

The first FireSat was carried into space aboard SpaceX's Transporter-13 mission. It will form part of a constellation of more than 50 that will use AI to detect and track wildfires only 5x5 metres in size.

It will provide updated high-resolution images every 20 minutes, designed to give first responders greater speed and certainty when tackling wildfires. AI compares the latest image with thousands of previous shots, considers local weather and atmospheric conditions, then determines if fire is present.

CREDIT: GOOGLE

Juliet Rothenberg,
Product Director
of Climate AI,
Google Research

Chris Van Arsdale, Climate & Energy Research Lead, Google

"Some satellites today take a picture about every five minutes, but they're coarse," notes Chris Van Arsdale, Google Research and Chairman, Earth Fire Alliance. "You're lucky if you can see the city of San Francisco in the image. You're certainly not going to see where a fire is until it's a few acres in size." Compounding this, many wildfires begin in mountainous areas where planes and drones may not fly to gather images.

Deploying responsible AI

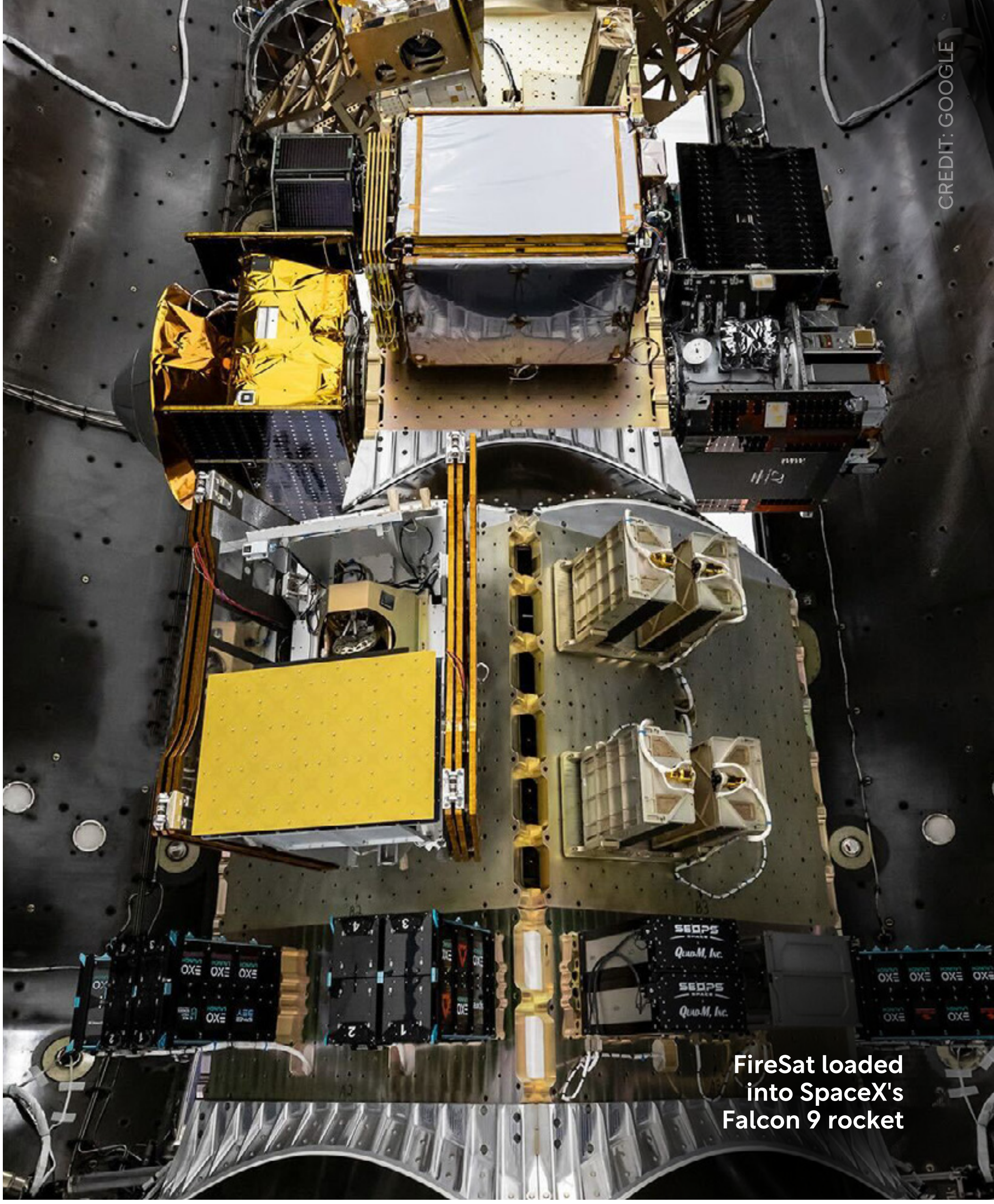
In late 2024 Google.org provided US$13m funding to kickstart the Firesat initiative, which is led by nonprofit organisation the Earth Fire Alliance.

FireSat can detect wildfires as small as 5x5 meters within

20

minutes

CREDIT: GOOGLE



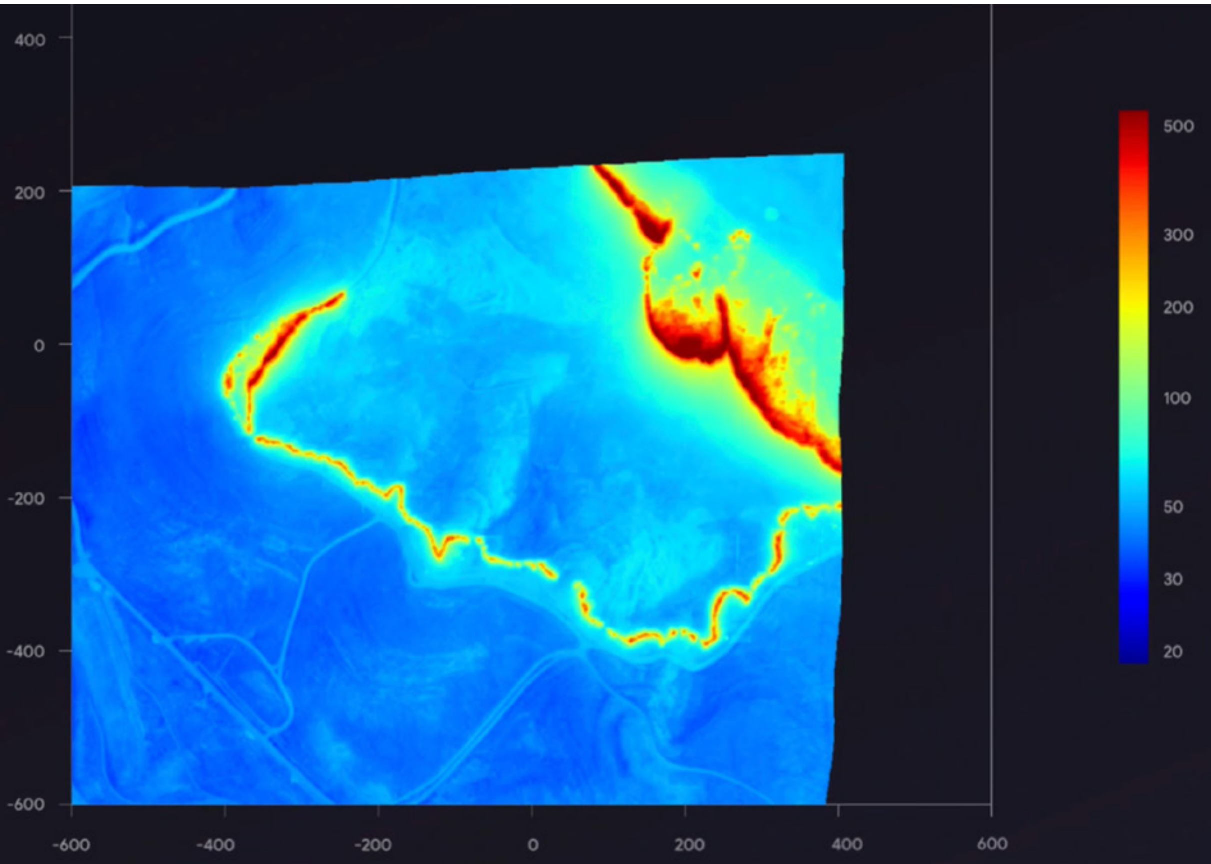
FireSat loaded into SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket

CREDIT: GOOGLE

CREDIT: GOOGLE

Mark Finney and Jason Forthofer of the US Forest Service at the Missoula Fire Sciences Lab

CREDIT: GOOGLE



Aerial infared heatmap

CREDIT: GOOGLE

The Google Research team, part of Google's AI division, developed custom infrared sensors designed to detect small-scale fires more effectively. During the development process these were flown over controlled burn areas to establish a baseline dataset for the satellite's AI model.

This model is capable of deep analysis of imagery, including considering nearby infrastructure and weather. "Differentiating between real fires and random 'noise' in the environment was a challenge," adds Chris. "We had to determine where to draw the line between what is a real fire versus things like sensor issues or misaligned pixels."

Such was the effectiveness of this process that, in one of the first tests, the sensors picked up a lit barbecue in someone's garden.

As well as tackling existing fires, FireSat will be used by scientists to create a global historical record of fire spread to help understand wildfire behaviour.

"FireSat is more than just an emergency response tool," Juliet explains. "It's also an incredible tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It's actually really beautiful that the constellation contributes to reducing climate change – while also responding to it." ○

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UP'S
Y
UBS?

***Ashlie Thurston,* Head of IT and Digital Transformation at Stonegate Group, the UK's largest pub company, is transforming operations and customer engagement**

The hospitality industry stands at a digital crossroads. Long considered something of a technological laggard compared to sectors like retail and financial services, pubs and restaurants are now experiencing rapid digital transformation, a process which was only accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

For traditional hospitality businesses, this shift presents both significant challenges and extraordinary opportunities. Digital solutions must enhance rather than detract from the warmth and personal connection that define great hospitality experiences. Yet the potential benefits – improved operational efficiency, deeper customer insights and enhanced guest experiences – make digital transformation an imperative.

The UK pub sector faces particular complexities. Balancing technological innovation with the cherished traditions of British pub culture requires careful navigation and strategic vision.

"It's a really exciting time to be in technology, more so in hospitality, because there's so much to go after and that gap with retail is closing so rapidly," says Ashlie Thurston, Head of IT and Digital Transformation at Stonegate Group.

Ashlie Thurston,
Head of IT and Digital
Transformation,
Stonegate Group

ASHLIE THURSTON

TITLE: HEAD OF IT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

COMPANY: STONEGATE GROUP

Ashlie Thurston is the Head of IT and Digital Transformation for the UK's largest pub company, driving technology innovation to fuel growth, efficiency, and true disruption in the hospitality sector. With nine years at Stonegate, she has led transformative change through acquisitions and expansions, integrating systems and streamlining operations. Ashlie challenges the status quo, leveraging digital advancements to enhance guest engagement and operational excellence. Her strategic leadership ensures seamless tech adoption, positioning the company at the forefront of industry evolution. Passionate about innovation, she pioneers bold solutions that redefine hospitality's digital future.

As the largest pub company in the UK, Stonegate Group faces unique challenges in implementing technology across its diverse estate. The company has undergone significant growth, expanding from around 500 sites when Ashlie joined nine years ago following multiple acquisitions, the most notable of which, Ei Group taking the group to over 4,500 sites.

Ashlie's role has evolved considerably during her tenure. She began as the company's first business analyst, coming from a fintech background at Currency Cloud in London, and has seen her responsibilities grow alongside the business itself.

"My role grew organically with the business, moving from business analyst to programme management," Ashlie explains. "When we merged with the Ei Group, I led the integration of the two technology stacks, which was challenging but gave us the opportunity to cherry pick the best elements from both businesses."

The digital transformation journey at Stonegate has accelerated dramatically in recent years, with the global pandemic forcing rapid adoption of technologies that had previously been considered optional.

"Booking capability is a perfect example," Ashlie explains. "We had been using the Access Collins platform in our higher volume sites, but suddenly needed to deploy it across our entire estate immediately."

This urgent need to adapt to changing guest behaviours marked the beginning of Stonegate's transformation, but the true catalyst came with new leadership. The arrival of CEO David McDowall, along with the company's first-ever Chief Information Officer, Guy Tambling, brought fresh perspectives to the business.

"They're applying retail principles to hospitality operations," Ashlie says. "Guy's retail background with TFG Limited and his experience in IT and e-commerce has brought a completely different perspective to our business."

The challenges of transformation in hospitality

For Stonegate, the technological challenges are multifaceted due to the company's unique structure.

> "It's a really exciting time to be in technology, more so in hospitality, because there's so much to go after"
>
> **ASHLIE THURSTON,**
> HEAD OF IT AND
> DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION,
> STONEGATE GROUP

access

Hotel Operations
F&B Operations
Hotel Pay
Guest Experience
Automated through data and AI, all underpinned by service
Distribution
People
Supplier Management

Case Study

How Access Hospitality is Driving Stonegate's Digital Transformation

The Access Group has helped Stonegate Group, the UK's largest pub company, close the technology gap through an integrated platform approach

Order a pint, book a table, collect loyalty points – the British pub is undergoing a revolution. Behind the scenes, cutting-edge technology is transforming how the hospitality industry operates.

At the forefront of this transformation is The Access Group, which is revolutionising the hospitality sector through its suite of integrated software solutions.

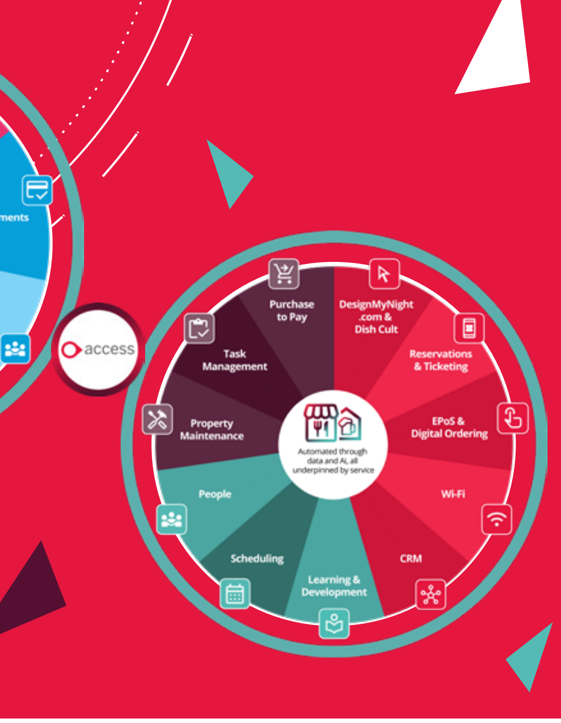
Martin Verdon-Roe, who leads the front-of-house software company within Access's Hospitality division, joined the organisation with a mandate to drive rapid growth in the UK, both organically and through acquisitions. "Last year we acquired Wireless Social, QikServe and Paytronix, and we'll continue our acquisition strategy this year," says Martin. "Our mission is to enhance the guest experience and make it truly memorable, which in turn makes our partners more successful."

Access offers solutions across the entire guest journey, from venue discovery through DesignMyNight, to reservations via Collins or ResDiary and order and pay functionality with QikServe.

The company also provides electronic point of sale solutions, kiosks and Acteol – a customer relationship management data platform that creates a complete loop for the guest journey. "My goal is to tie these solutions together into an integrated front-of-house platform," Martin explains. "We're also building AI capabilities with our Access Evo brand to make operations easier and faster."

The company has been doubling in size approximately every four years through both organic growth and strategic acquisitions, focusing on its mission of "empowering businesses to do more."

Perhaps nowhere is this mission more visible than at Stonegate Group, Britain's largest pub company with more than 4,500 sites ranging from high-street brands like Slug & Lettuce to traditional locals tucked away in villages nationwide.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Task Management
Automated through data and AI, all underpinned by service

Leading the technology charge at Stonegate is Ashlie Thurston, Head of IT and Digital Transformation. After an extensive evaluation process, Stonegate chose Access as its partner to unify its diverse portfolio.

“Access stood out not only by meeting all our requirements but also for their innovation and agility,” she explains. "We've developed a really strong partnership, and use multiple products across Stonegate Group, including Acteol for our MiXR app and customer database. The insights it provides are monumental in our transformation journey."

From supplier to strategic partner

Martin notes that the hospitality sector has traditionally lagged significantly behind retail in technology adoption, but this gap is rapidly narrowing.

“Pre-COVID, a restaurant might have been capturing about 5% of guest data, and now you’re seeing guest data reach up to 80%,” he reveals. “That unlocks amazing opportunities in how you gather that data, keep it enriched and leverage it for both business and guest benefit.”

The partnership between Access and Stonegate began building around 2019 when Access established Acteol as Stonegate’s customer data platform. This foundation allowed Stonegate to build effective messaging and loyalty strategies that have transformed their business operations.

“When we integrated Collins, we enabled the capture of reservation data, an area where hospitality has traditionally been weak,” Martin continues. “By adding the MiXR project on top, we created an engagement platform that works across all demographics and sub-brands.” This approach created what Martin describes as a “virtuous cycle” of building the guest platform, capturing more data and creating better experiences.

“When building a platform, you need to work in lockstep with your clients,” he says. “We frame our approach around driving revenue and profitability through our solutions.

“Access is fortunate to have the resources for acquisitions when needed, which gives us flexibility in how we respond to emerging needs – whether through building, partnering, or acquiring capabilities.”

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Advertisement feature

"The sheer volume of technologies, tools, applications and systems that we need to support a business of our complexity and scale is massive," Ashlie reveals.

Stonegate operates through three distinct business units: the Pub Partners estate, the fully managed estate and Craft Union. Each has its own technological requirements and compliance considerations.

Beyond its internal complexity, Stonegate must also navigate an industry that has historically been resistant to collaboration. "Hospitality as an industry is massively behind retail. We've historically been quite behind the curve," Ashlie says.

"It's also challenging in its nature as well – it's always been a very closed-door industry with competitors. It's always very secretive regarding what everybody's up to, even though everybody's having the same problems and challenges. We don't come together as a cohort to try and solve the problems together as a unit."

The pandemic accelerated the need to overcome these challenges, as customer expectations shifted dramatically. "There was a huge technological shift coming out of COVID in the way that our guests wanted to interact – pre-booking, pre-planning, knowing exactly where they were going, ordering at table," Ashlie explains.

> “We must never lose sight of why people visit pubs – they’re seeking human connection”
>
> **ASHLIE THURSTON,**
> HEAD OF IT AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION,
> STONEGATE GROUP

“All of those things were on the edges pre-Covid, and they have really come to the forefront. What we’ve seen is a generational shift in the way people interact in the pub sector now, and how and why they want to go to a pub for a night out.”

Balancing technology with traditional hospitality values

Technology implementation in pubs requires careful consideration of the fundamentals that have always drawn people to these establishments. Ashlie is adamant that digital solutions must enhance rather than replace the human element that makes pubs special.

BE AT ONE
COCKTAIL BAR

6–8 weeks to hours:

Reduction in time needed to implement pricing changes across the estate thanks to digital transformation

BEAT ONE
BEAT ONE

"We must never lose sight of why people visit pubs – they're seeking human connection," Ashlie emphasises. "There's a generational shift happening: younger customers want immediate gratification and digital interaction, while many still want the traditional experience of conversation at the bar."

This understanding shaped the development of Stonegate's MiXR app, a loyalty platform that offers optional engagement rather than becoming a requirement for service. The app provides gamification and surprise offers to appeal to younger patrons while also serving traditional customers.

"We were actually surprised by how actively older generations have embraced MiXR – it's become part of their community connection to their local," Ashlie reveals.

According to Ashlie, MiXR plays a carefully considered role in the overall guest experience. "It should be an enhancement of the customer experience. It can be the reason that drives the footfall, drives the guests to the venue, the reason for going in the first place, but then once they get there, it has to be about that overall experience of the warmest welcome."

She envisions the app as "almost like the best friend in your back pocket."

"It shouldn't be something the guest focuses on – it's not the reason our guests go to the pub – but it should be the reason why they keep going back and want to go back, why they're engaged with us," Ashlie explains.

UK largest:

Digital screen network in the pub sector, driving revenue through advertising while delivering location-specific information

Alongside MiXR, Stonegate has developed one of the UK's largest digital screen networks. This technology drives revenue through advertising while delivering location-specific information about events and promotions to enhance the guest experience.

The group has also worked on other solutions, working with technology provider The Access Group on CRM and web app ordering. Access offers integrated software solutions across the hospitality sector, and the company's relationship with Stonegate has evolved from a traditional vendor arrangement to a true strategic alliance.

Martin Verdon-Roe, who leads the front-of-house software company within Access's Hospitality division, explains that the collaboration with Stonegate began around 2017 with Access Trail, followed by Access Collins in 2018 and 2021 saw the implementation of Access Acteol as the pub group's customer data platform which is the power behind MiXR, creating what Martin describes as "a virtuous cycle of building the guest platform, capturing more data and creating better experiences."

The power of data transforming operations

Perhaps the most significant shift in Stonegate's approach has been the move toward data-driven decision making. The company now conducts more pilots and trials across its estate than ever before, relying on multiple data points to shape strategic choices.

"The biggest shift for Stonegate is becoming truly data-driven," Ashlie says. "Our decisions are shaped by multiple data points: guest feedback, team input, end-user adoption rates, and ultimately, impact on the bottom line."

This approach represents a fundamental change in how the company evaluates technological investments, with regular checkpoints to ensure initiatives are tracking against profit and loss targets and that guest sentiment aligns with the company's vision.

Ashlie is particularly enthusiastic about the potential of customer data to transform the business. "The real thing is in the true power of the data, the segmentation of that data, really understanding and knowing our guests," she explains.

The integration with Access's Acteol platform has enabled unprecedented insights. "Being able to use the Acteol platform to pinpoint when somebody who was, for example, drinking Guinness all summer, then suddenly they shifted to something else. Understanding whether that was because of a price change – was it a pricing decision? Was it that they didn't like it after a formula change? Or if we sent them a voucher for the drink, would they go back to it? This is gold dust for our drinks suppliers and something no-one else in the industry can provide at this level."

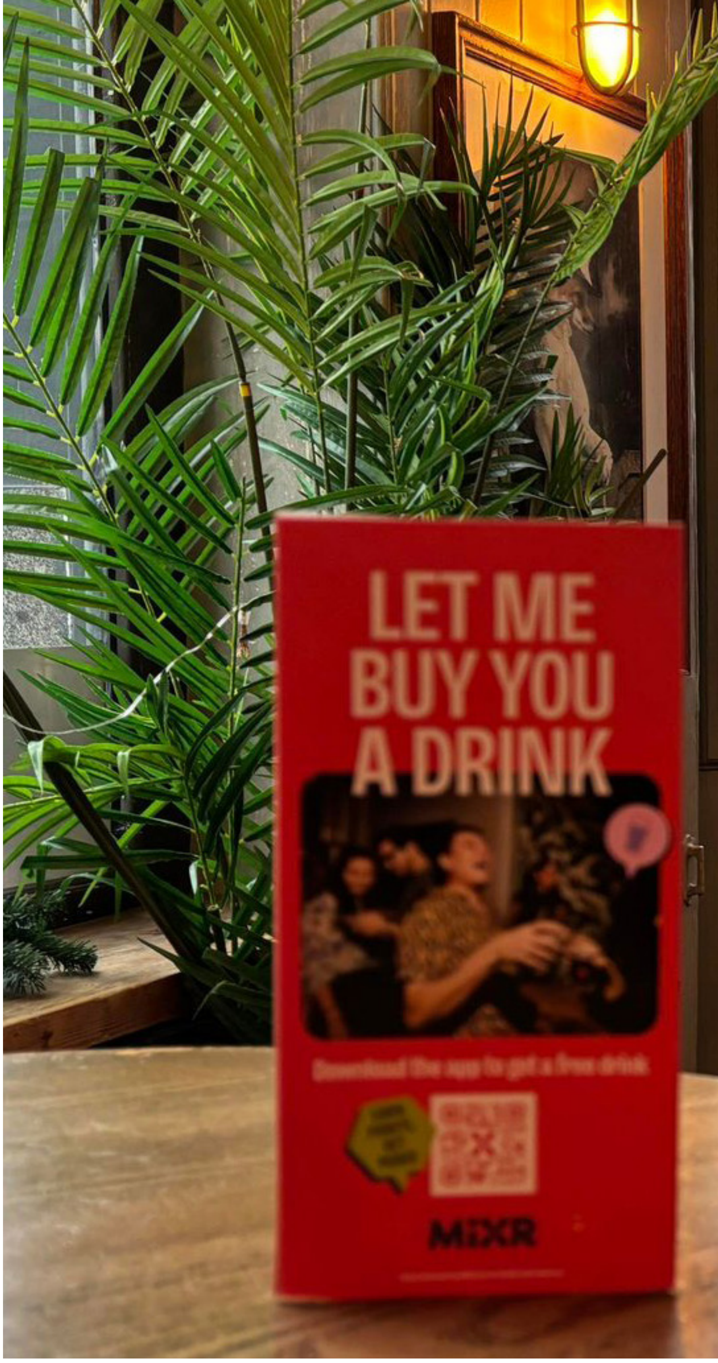
This data-driven approach extends beyond marketing to operational efficiencies. "We can do loads of things in the background as well," Ashlie says. "You can use those data points from MiXR – we've initiated, for example, the ability to change pricing across our estate next day. Before, that was a six to eight week process. We've now reduced that to hours with the support of OpenR technology."

The implementation of the QikServe ordering system exemplifies this methodical approach. Stonegate previously managed various branded apps across its estate but realised they were missing an opportunity to unite their portfolio under a single umbrella brand.

"We had a variety of branded apps across our estate. Stonegate has some prominent brands like Slug & Lettuce and Be At One, but also many local pubs that aren't strongly associated with our corporate identity," Ashlie explains.

After a thorough Request For Proposal process, Access stood out for both meeting requirements and offering innovation potential. The integration capabilities were particularly compelling, as QikServe was already part of the Access platform portfolio.

"QikServe eliminates the friction of downloading a dedicated app for a one-time visit," Ashlie explains. "It allows walk-in guests to order easily, whilst still giving us the opportunity to convert them to MiXR by showing the loyalty points



> "The biggest shift for Stonegate is becoming truly data-driven"
>
> **ASHLIE THURSTON,**
> HEAD OF IT AND
> DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION,
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preto
Brazilian Steak
GUINNESS
THE MOST
WONDERFUL PINT
OF THE YEAR

they could have earned." In our next release QikServe will be integrated into MiXR so guests can use the OrderPay services in app, further removing friction for our guests.

Leveraging AI for practical applications

AI is an unavoidable topic in echnology discussions, but Stonegate is taking a measured approach to implementation. Rather than adopting AI simply because of its recent surge in popularity, the company has launched an automation workstream with three distinct approaches.

"We're careful not to implement AI just because it's trendy," Ashlie notes. "First, we'll identify processes that simply need workflow improvements rather than complex technological solutions."

The second phase involves ensuring full utilisation of existing systems, recognising that organisations often use tools the same way for years without exploring new features or optimisations.

Only after addressing these fundamentals will Stonegate explore how machine learning can enhance repetitive tasks, improve data presentation or extract information from inconsistent documentation.

500 to 4,500+:

Growth in number of Stonegate pub sites since Ashlie Thurston joined nine years ago

One practical application involves processing gas safety certificates from different councils, each with their own formats.

"Document scanning technology will significantly streamline this process," Ashlie says. "We've already begun implementing AI in select areas – integrating chatbots for out-of-hours bookings, using Microsoft tools internally and developing data extraction tools for pricing decisions."

The company's technology partners are also enhancing their products with AI capabilities. Access is rolling out Evo, its AI platform, across the product suite, including an upcoming Collins Cool AI feature that will allow guests to complete bookings offline without staff interaction.

A vision for industry-wide standardisation

Looking to the future, Ashlie is particularly excited about a strategic plan to develop a Standardised Data Model for the hospitality sector. Though still in its early stages, the concept has revolutionary potential for an industry that has traditionally operated in silos.

"I'm particularly excited about our strategic plan to develop a Standardised Data Model for the pub sector," Ashlie explains. "The major pub companies all use similar partners but have never collaborated on standardising our data."

The problem is one of inefficiency and duplication. All major pub companies face identical challenges – a pub might be identified differently across various systems, and product codes may follow different formats. Each company currently pays separately to solve these same issues with custom development.

"We all face identical problems – a pub might be identified by its name in one system, a site number in another, a pub number in a third. Product codes are alphanumeric in one system but only numeric in another," Ashlie elaborates.

Access has offered to host a roundtable bringing together major pub companies to discuss standardisation, leveraging their existing relationships to facilitate this conversation where direct competitor engagement might be challenging.

"This initiative could be transformational for the entire sector," Ashlie says. "It's what we mean when we talk about disrupting technology in hospitality – not just innovations like MiXR, but fundamental changes to how the sector operates."

Ashlie Thurston,
Head of IT and Digital
Transformation,
Stonegate Group

DCC TECHNOLOGY

ENHANCING LIVE PROGRESSIVE TE

ES THROUGH ECHNOLOGY

WRITTEN BY:
MATT
HIGH

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS
VAUGHAN

DCC Technology’s *Vish Chhatralia* on connecting leading technology companies with end users, creating markets, and the power of leadership

Vishal (Vish) Chhatralia is right. How we work, and the businesses and relationships we create, should be about purpose, giving back and enhancing lives. It’s a message that’s been instilled in him since Mrs Grey, an early teacher he still cites as a key inspiration today, kicked him into action. The fact that Vish can list several other key mentors who spotted and nurtured his enterprising spirit is as much testament to his obvious passion for his work as it is anything else.

“I’ve been very lucky,” he reflects. “Having people throughout my career who supported and challenged me, taught me about the power of leadership and that success comes from execution and driving real progress has been transformational.”

Fortunately, it’s a sentiment that’s perfectly in tune with the vision and mission of DCC Technology, which Vish joined around five years ago. DCC Technology is a collection of specialist businesses that act as enablers between leading technology brands and the people and organisations that use their products. It provides innovative technologies that are a catalyst for progress, improve lives and the world we live in, and enhance outcomes and experiences for those that use them.

Vish Chhatralia,
Group Chief Digital &
Innovation Officer,
DCC Technology

VISHAL CHHATRALIA

TITLE: **GROUP CHIEF DIGITAL & INNOVATION OFFICER**

Vishal is the Chief Digital Officer for DCC Technology and SVP of Marketing and Commercial Excellence for its North American Division, part of FTSE 100 company DCC plc. With 20 years of experience, he has led digital and marketing transformations, scaled digital into a US$1bn channel with 15 years of continuous growth and founded high-growth business ventures within a corporate environment. A corporate innovator, he has driven business turnarounds, AI adoption and commercial advancements. Passionate about people, he advocates for mental health and social mobility. As a key leader, Vishal helps DCC Technology thrive as a specialist value-added distributor, committed to value creation, local agility and providing the progressive technology solutions the world needs.

Vish, who joined DCC Technology after a 15-year stint at global industrial and electrical products distributor RS Group, holds the role of Group Chief Digital and Innovation Officer. “Essentially, my mandate is to support and drive the businesses within our group forward, to make progress and leverage all of the 2.0 opportunities around us,” he explains. “That covers opportunities such as AI, digital, modern marketing, innovation and championing a more inclusive workplace to drive our evolution. I also sit in our North America business – our biggest region – as Senior Vice President of Commercial and Marketing. My work is about hands-on progress, strategy and execution.”

Providing technology the world needs

DCC Technology works with leading and emerging brands to take their products to market across three core sectors: professional technology (Pro Tech), which is predominantly pro AV as well as specialist infrastructure solutions from server, networking, AI and Cloud solutions; lifestyle technology (Life Tech), which is mainly consumer electronics and kitchen technology products for the home; and information technology (Info Tech). It has more than 2,700 technology brands in its portfolio including the likes of LG, Samsung, Sony, Microsoft, Liebherr, Whirlpool, JBL, Xbox and more, and works with over 35,000 resellers to reach over 6 million end users.

By turnover, DCC Technology is the number one AV specialist distributor with Pro AV revenues of $2.4bn, the leading North American Life Tech distributor and the sixth largest western EU Info Tech distributor. Its portfolio of businesses provide critical services to vendors and resellers across distribution, marketplaces, direct to consumer, digital marketing, retail and PR/media.

In the Info Tech sector DCC Technology supplies both the B2C and B2B markets with the latest IT equipment and services. This typically includes products such as laptops, headsets

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and other devices it distributes for companies through its Exertis, MTR and Hypertec brands.

"Our Life Tech cluster of businesses provides a broad range of more consumer-focused technologies for the home like air conditioners, TVs, gaming, musical instruments, white goods and smart kitchen appliances," Vish says. "The focus is on providing technology solutions that enhance or enrich people's lives. We connect leading vendors like Samsung, Hestan or JBL with major retailers like Home Depot, Walmart and Amazon, as well as a long reach of independent retailers. By doing so, we generate demand for them in the marketplace."

The Pro Tech sector, of which AV technology from major brands like LG is the largest component under the trading brand Almo Pro AV, is DCC Technology's biggest market and where a significant proportion of its strategic investment and growth is focused. Here, the company brings high-end visual and audio technologies that store and display information together to create elevated, emotional and memorable experiences in environments like stadium concerts, restaurants and hotels, trading floors and offices. Through its specialist brands, Pro Tech takes care of the design and installation of big screens, touch screens, advanced infrastructure solutions and professional AV.

"It's our biggest vertical by far," Vish adds. "Technology-wise it includes the kinds of large-scale Direct View LED (DVLED) screens you see in public areas, retail spaces, food and leisure venues, airports, houses of worship or at mass entertainment events. We're also the leading distributor of pro audio technology in North America, which is the kind of high-end audio equipment that ends up at major music events like the South by Southwest Festival.

"Alongside these two key areas, Pro Tech also includes all of the technologies, solutions and infrastructure for businesses," he continues. "Examples include professional configuration of networking and server-based computing solutions, through to the cloud and AI solutions necessary to enable a host of end-user applications.

> **“WE’RE THE LEADING DISTRIBUTOR OF PRO AUDIO AND VIDEO TECHNOLOGY IN NORTH AMERICA”**
>
> **VISH CHHATRALIA,**
> GROUP CHIEF DIGITAL
> AND INNOVATION OFFICER,
> DCC TECHNOLOGY

These range from trackside advanced computing in motor sport to content streaming or enabling the AI revolution.

“This aspect has evolved rapidly over recent years as customer demands and expectations grow,” Vish notes. “Ten years ago, for example, the networking and computing requirements of these applications and the data they were crunching were a lot lower. However, today you have large amounts of data needing to be stored or analysed and the need to distribute high-quality content at scale. It requires constant innovation and the ability to provide cutting-edge solutions.”

TO MAKE
YOUR NECK
SHINE

How LG’s Strategy is Driving the Pro AV Technology Market

LG shares how it leverages partnerships, consultative sales approaches and technology to stay competitive in the professional audiovisual sector

The professional audiovisual (Pro AV) market continues to accelerate as commercial environments demand more sophisticated digital display solutions. With global Pro AV revenues projected to surge, major electronics manufacturers are jockeying for position through strategic distribution partnerships and technology innovation. LG Electronics is one such company who has been expanding its commercial display footprint through a multifaceted approach, combining product development and channel strategy. Matt Waidley, LG’s Director of Distribution in the US, is responsible for a team of distribution salespeople that call on a network of distributors. The main goal of the LG Distribution team is to educate and enable the reseller and distribution sales people on the value that LG brings to the eco-system of the Pro-AV Market.

NEW COLLECTION

LG CreateBoard

HOW IS LG STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE IN THE PRO AV TECHNOLOGY SECTOR?

Matt breaks the main technologies LG is focusing on into three categories.
There are “keep the lights on” traditional signage technologies that we have put LG on the map and then there is the “cutting edge” side driven by our R&D working toward the future.

Regarding the cutting edge tech:
1) “The interactive whiteboard market is really becoming a change agent in the education and corporate collaboration spaces. LG has developed some fantastic technologies that really deliver what the teachers and CTOs are looking for.”
2) “Direct View LED technology, (which you would easily recognize as what lights up Time Square in NY) is quickly taking over many potions of the traditional flat panel signage space. LG is heavily invested and helping to drive this change. Higher brightness, longer life cycles and infinitely expandable form factors really make this technology a huge focus for all of the players in the industry.”

Then there’s AI. “If you’re not familiar with the Gram Laptop, check them out,” Matt says. “They’re really light. That’s why we call them the Gram.” He further highlights specific spaces that LG is innovating technology, asking: “How well can we play with a camera, with a control system, with a mount?” But then, from a sales perspective, understanding distribution and the arena in which they play in is important and how to leverage that for reach and scale.Then also having that consultative end, making sure that those resellers and those end users don’t feel like they’re making a very expensive decision on their own.

exertis | ALMO

LG’s partnership with Exertis Almo

Exertis Almo is LG’s number one pro AV mover for LG – and Matt emphasises that it’s “way more than a partnership. It’s a friendship. It’s a family. “We’ve been growing in high triple digits in those emerging high-end technologies with them for a while now and in strong double-digit growth in our very mature markets,” he says. EA helps LG and others in the ecosystem provide the reseller community a better financial solution to help integrators manage cashflow throughout the lifecycle of a project.

BRINGING BRANDS AND PEOPLE TOGETHER

DCC Technology works with leading and emerging brands, taking their products to market across three sectors:

- **Pro Tech**
  Enabling high-end audio, visual and infrastructure solutions in environments like stadium concerts, restaurants and hotels, trading floors and offices.
- **Life Tech**
  Enabling high-quality lifestyles through supplying smart kitchen appliances, household technology and advanced musical instruments.
- **Info Tech**
  Working with businesses and other customers to make faster connections happen with the latest consumer technology and devices.

Evolving distribution and technology

The pace of technology innovation has changed rapidly over Vish's tenure at DCC Technology. Directly within the business, new innovations in marketing and data provide him and the team with greater capabilities when it comes to analysing potential markets for vendors, understanding customer and industry trends, and driving strategic decision making that benefits both vendors and resellers working with the company.

More broadly, the demand for new and innovative solutions in Pro Tech and other sectors provides both opportunities and challenges for vendors. "The amount of content we consume visually has changed dramatically – the number of screens around us is just incredible," he explains. "For the vendors we work with, it's akin

to a technology arms race, which brings new challenges related to increasingly short product lifecycles.

"Whether it's LG, Samsung or any of the other major companies, you have an environment where the adoption of AI and machine learning has accelerated the pace at which they develop new products exponentially," Vish adds. "It's essentially a constant cycle of innovation that creates challenges around how much inventory we hold as the distributor and means we have to be constantly moving at pace to ensure vendors satisfy their market."

Vish describes other challenges in the fast-paced distribution sector that impact vendors and resellers. "The face of distribution is changing. Shorter product lifecycles mean greater competition among vendors, which challenges us as the distributor sitting between them and the market," he comments. "We have to stay way ahead of the development and trend curves, having a deep understanding of vendor propositions and technologies, and the ability to create a platform very quickly to get them to market. As a specialist we also have to ensure we have the right services around those products.

"Data helps us to do that and removes a lot of the more manual market research of the past," says Vish. "We harness new innovations in MarTech (marketing and data technology tools) to create demand and penetrate the right markets for our vendors. We use listening tools and technology to analyse market data, and have hired and built highly specialised teams capable of forecasting trends, understanding future product demand

and the dynamics within a market to help vendors win. AI is helping us to improve this even more and ensure we're as effective as possible for our vendors and resellers.

"From a marketing perspective, our challenge is showing vendors we're a mature and innovative marketing organisation that acts as an extension of their business. For resellers, our role is to help them create end-user markets in an environment where engagement and reaching end users is critical in an attention economy."

Creating markets and delivering value

DCC Technology's specialist businesses and collective are critical for vendors and resellers in this environment, enabling growth and helping them reach their customers.

"The biggest requirement from vendors is to create markets and drive their market share," Vish notes. "In many cases they put millions of dollars and a huge amount of skill and innovation into developing potentially world-changing products. Our role is to collaborate closely to create and deliver an end-to-end go-to-market strategy. This covers everything from credit, operations, sales, marketing motions and services around the product, through to distribution to resellers and end users."

DCC Technology's portfolio of businesses is essential for delivering this service, Vish says. "Some have a really strong legacy in the industry, they're known as 'market makers' by vendors for their ability to deliver. We

Marshall

have a powerful heritage of creating markets for industry-leading vendors, who view us as a critical part of their go-to-market operations. We can give incredible access to resellers and networks they couldn't open alone. For AV in North America, for example, we have up to 15,000 resellers. They each have their own networks of end users to reach the 14,000 large end businesses in the US and c.22 million small- to medium-sized businesses. That represents significant value and an incredible reach which has been built over many years."

Close relationships are critical to this process, Vish attests, describing how the company becomes an extension of the vendor's business. This involves working closely to understand its products, marketing strategy and potential customers as well as creating the relevant messaging to maximise end-user engagement in collaboration with resellers.

An example of this process comes in DCC Technology's ongoing work with leading technology leader LG. The Korean firm, which develops technology across a broad spectrum including display and AV solutions, electronics, home appliances and automotive innovation works with DCC Technology's Pro Tech businesses.

"We have an incredible and very strategic relationship," Vish says of the partnership. "We're a key distribution partner so they rely on us to get to market. We collaborate closely on new product release plans, potential markets to tap into, product development areas and identifying strengths, opportunities and weaknesses. We act as an extension of our vendors, including with LG."

An example is in the LED signage market, where LG is particularly strong. "They challenged us to grow that market and sell their USPs to resellers and in turn to end users," Vish shares. "We have a team of more than 170 specialist salespeople in the AV sector, as well as

“MY MANDATE IS TO SUPPORT AND DRIVE THE BUSINESSES WITHIN OUR GROUP FORWARD”

VISH CHHATRALIA,
GROUP CHIEF DIGITAL
AND INNOVATION OFFICER,
DCC TECHNOLOGY

dedicated LG marketing and business managers who engage our resellers and actively work on seeking out new opportunities through an LG-first approach. We also provide services around specifically engaging resellers face-to-face. Each year we hold four industry-leading events across the US where, in the case of LG as an example, we provide floor space and capabilities to market their products, and work with resellers and other companies to maximise exposure as much as possible.

“We have the services, technology, leadership, knowledge and skills within our business to make the reseller’s lives really easy when it comes to buying, installing and maintaining LG products.”

“WE HAVE A POWERFUL HERITAGE OF CREATING MARKETS FOR OUR VENDORS”

VISH CHHATRALIA,
GROUP CHIEF DIGITAL
AND INNOVATION OFFICER,
DCC TECHNOLOGY

Growth, innovation and making markets

The world needs technology. And the fast pace of development in the sectors that DCC Technology operates in means there is no shortage of opportunities to continue adding value to the operations of vendors and resellers.

The business has three core strategic priorities to ensure it maximises these opportunities. It continues to push towards Vish's 'DCC Technology 2.0', a multi-country operating model with best-in-class people, operating processes and infrastructure that gives partners the benefits of scale but with local market knowledge, specialism and agility.

North America remains a key focus. Over the last six years the business has grown significantly in the region through acquisition strategy to a point where the market is worth close to US$2.5bn in revenue. DCC Technology aims to continue this trend, reinforcing its position in Pro Tech in North America and Europe ,and Life Tech in North America both organically and through acquisition. At the same time, Vish believes the business will also target the LATAM sector.

People and impact are at the heart of this growth. The company is staunchly people-centric and places empowerment of its teams and the nurturing of their skills and capabilities at the forefront of its ability to deliver.

For Vish, several trends will underpin the next couple of years. "The impact of AI will be profound in marketing and distribution," he says. "The vendor wants us to create markets but end users are being bombarded with product content. Distributors that can use AI to create real value and a niche in the space will gain a pretty large competitive advantage.

"At the heart of this is going to be people, including retaining and recruiting a team who can win in the AI world. AI will mean people matter more than ever. I'm convinced the real differentiator will be the value it enables companies like us to unlock and how it frees up our talented people, enabling them to create more specialist value, deeper customer relationships and greater innovation

Another big battleground will be the ongoing pace of innovation and rapid product lifecycles, says Vish. The leading vendors will continue to dominate, but he predicts an influx of new technology innovators that make the market even more challenging. "For us that means ensuring we identify and work with the right vendors and technology companies, but also play into the right sectors in terms of technology development and staying ahead of the curve.

"Lastly, we need to capitalise on opportunities to create value add around the products we sell, whether that's through installation, complimentary services, maintenance or even finance services like subscription based options.

"It's an endlessly exciting proposition for me and all those in our businesses. When I speak with people they're genuinely motivated about driving progress and innovation as well as the kind of impact we can have on people. It's an industry that you can't help wanting to be a part of." ○

Polish
Data Center
Association

POLAND:
A COOL PLACE FOR DATA CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

AD FEATURE
WRITTEN BY:
AMBER JACKSON

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS VAUGHAN

Piotr Kowalski of the Polish Data Center Association shares how Poland is becoming a European data centre growth market with a thermal management focus

The European data centre market faces mounting pressure from AI workloads, renewable energy requirements and land constraints in traditional hubs.

FLAP-D markets in particular (Frankfurt, London, Amsterdam, Paris and Dublin) have encountered a range of grid capacity limitations and planning restrictions as demand continues to rise. These constraints have led to operators now being pushed to consider alternative locations for large-scale developments.

It is against this backdrop that Poland is emerging as a strong presence in the European data centre market. With the country's ongoing investments in grid development, alongside its rapid renewable energy transition and its ability to support digital infrastructure, it is attracting both regional and international data centre operators.

"We see Poland as a contender for Tier 2 market status, allowing European data centre capacity expansion outside of the FLAP-D region and serving as a gateway to Central and Eastern Europe," says Piotr Kowalski, Managing Director of the Polish Data Center Association (PLDCA).

Wojciech Stramski, Beyond.pl CEO, adds: "When it comes to AI training,

PIOTR KOWALSKI

TITLE: **MANAGING DIRECTOR, POLISH DATA CENTER ASSOCIATION**

Strategic business leader with proven track record in international technical sales and business development. Stanford GSB LEAD Program graduate with 22+ years professional and 16+ years data centre industry experience, with excellent understanding of EMEA market outlook and major industry players across the value chain (design engineering, critical equipment vendors, contractors, colocation operators and hyperscale end users). Proficient in B2B sales of large and complex solutions to data centre colocation, telco and hyperscale cloud accounts with increasing responsibility and regional coverage, including a 4-year expat experience in Middle East and Africa. Former Vertiv CTO Office liaison for EMEA and Global Innovation Office technology scout, responsible for the partnership with Research Institutes of Sweden.

**Piotr Kowalski,
Managing Director,
Polish Data Centre
Association**

Atman Data Centers: DC WAW-3 under construction

“THE MISSION OF THE ASSOCIATION ALLOWS COMPANIES TO THINK STRATEGICALLY TOWARDS THE OVERALL BENEFIT OF THE MARKET”

SŁAWOMIR KOSZOŁKO,
CEO,
ATMAN

the mainland Europe position of Poland allows it to serve the whole continent within the required latency range."

Prioritising sustainability and opportunity

To support such growth, the PLDCA was founded in May 2023 by five major colocation operators. The organisation represents companies across the data centre value chain, from site acquisition through design engineering, general contractors, MEP system integrators, equipment vendors, commissioning agents and facility management providers.

The mission of the association is to ultimately become a go-to representative of the Polish data centre industry, whilst also acting as a driving force behind the sustainable growth of the industry within Poland.

On this, Piotr says: "The mission of PLDCA has quickly been recognised and supported by various data centre industry stakeholders, both national and international. As of February 2025, PLDCA consists of 45 companies representing a full range of data centre value chain.

Sławomir Koszołko, Atman CEO, explains: "The diverse expertise of our partners allows the Association to identify and tackle the strategic aspects of market growth and be recognised by the policy makers and other industry stakeholders as a go-to body when it comes to data centre-related topics."

Having established its position, PLDCA has been working closely with the Ministry of Digital Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Energy as well as other stakeholders involved in the legislative process affecting the industry across Poland.

For instance, national High Voltage grid operator, PSE, has incorporated data centre growth into its infrastructure planning and has allocated capacity for 1200MW of data centre development by 2034.

Already, PLDCA has supported public consultations of the country's 2035 Digitalisation Strategy led by the Ministry of Digital Affairs as well as the updated National Plan for Energy and Climate led by the Ministry of Climate and Environment, where the association advocated for grid decarbonisation and the wide utilisation of waste heat recovery from data centres.

For Piotr, the association will continue to champion Polish data centre growth.

POLAND'S DECARBONISATION PATHWAY

2023

50% lower CO2 emissions vs. 2023 by 2030

2030

72% green energy

Poland operates the

Second largest

district heating system in Europe with significant opportunities for large-scale heat recovery

€185bn government investment in grid improvements and decarbonisation by 2030

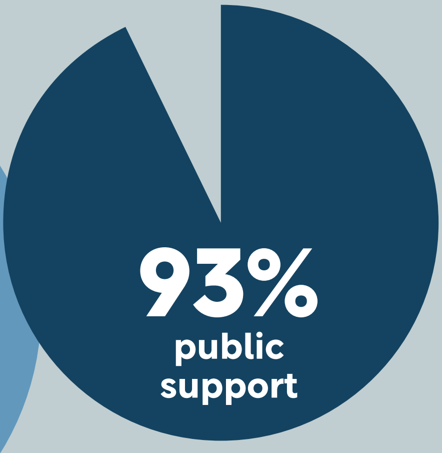
Nuclear power development in Poland

The goal:

98%

reduction of CO2 emissions by

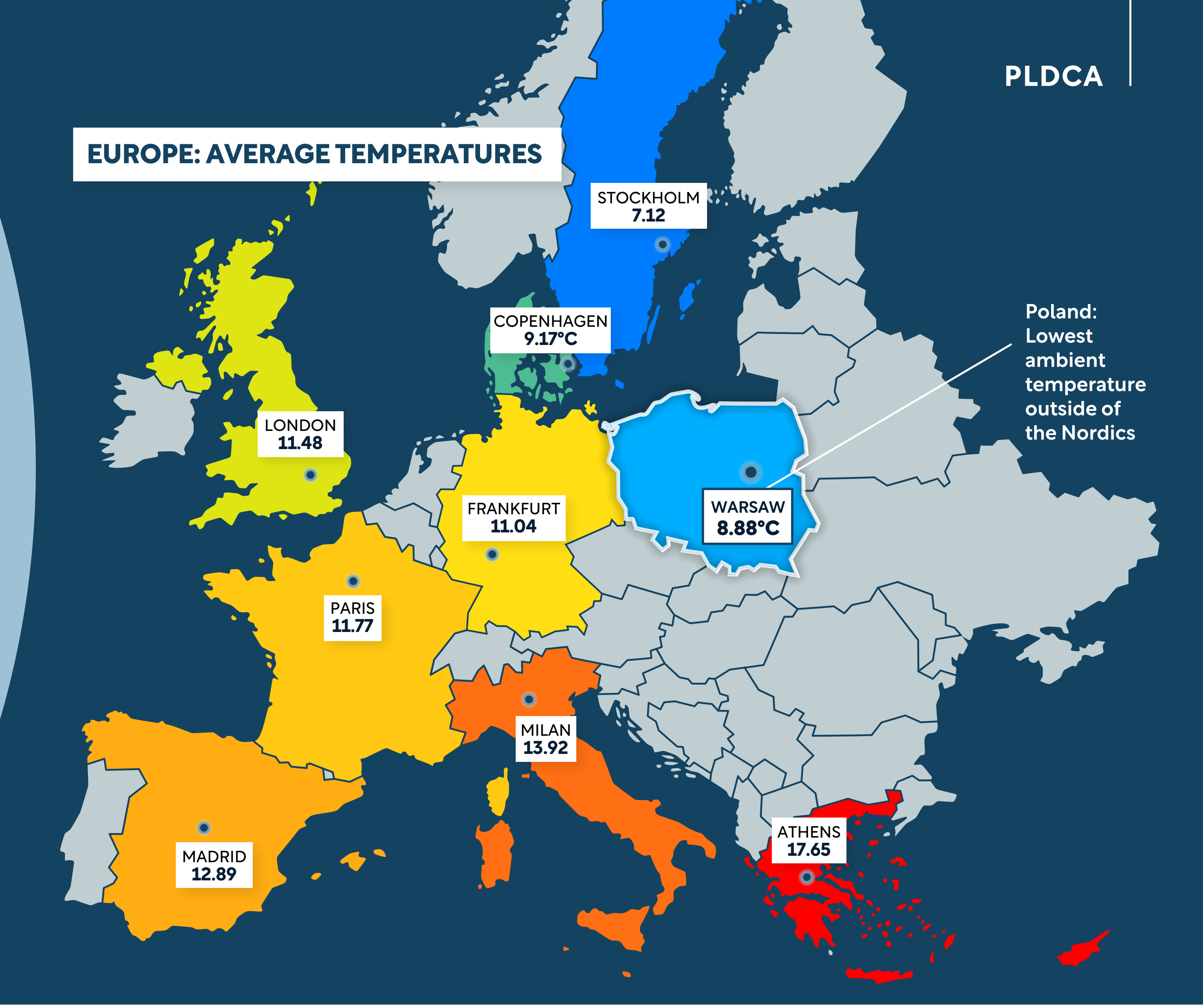
2040



93% public support

16.2GW

pipeline of nuclear power projects (central and SMR)



EUROPE: AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

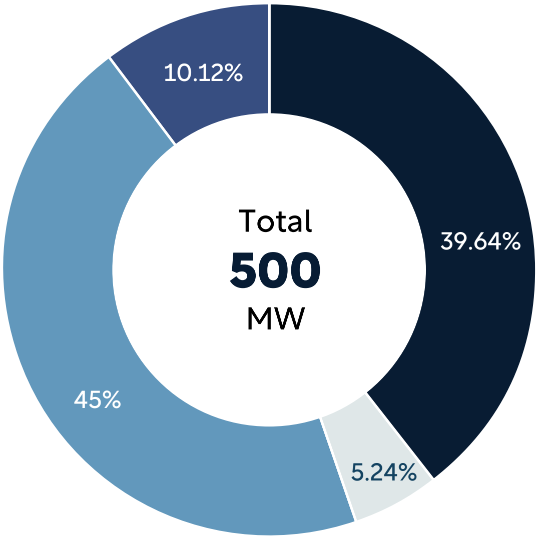
STOCKHOLM
7.12
COPENHAGEN
9.17°C
LONDON
11.48
FRANKFURT
11.04
WARSAW
8.88°C
PARIS
11.77
MILAN
13.92
MADRID
12.89
ATHENS
17.65

Poland: Lowest ambient temperature outside of the Nordics

The Polish Data Centre Market: Some Key Advantages

- **Proud NATO member** (March 1999) and EU member (May 2004)
- **Cool climate** (lowest ambient temperature outside of Nordics) and low PUE
- **Grid availability** with up to 1200MW of data centres included in the national High Voltage grid investment plan by 2034
- Significant investments in **grid decarbonisation,** supported by national policy to renewables and nuclear
- The **fastest-growing economy in the EU** with a very skilled and experienced talent pool at a competitive salary range
- High **safety** index

HIGHLIGHTS Q1 2025

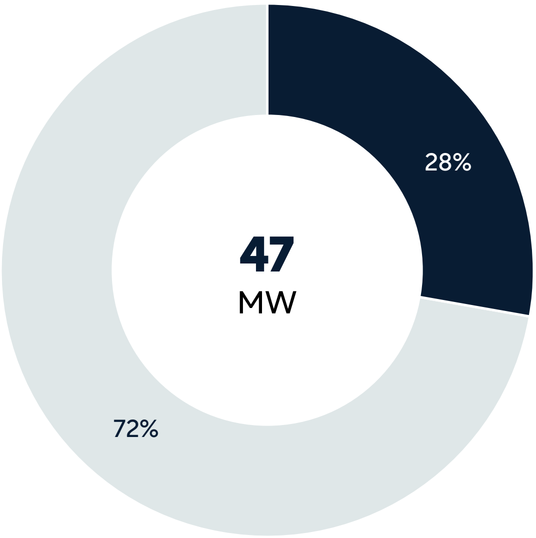


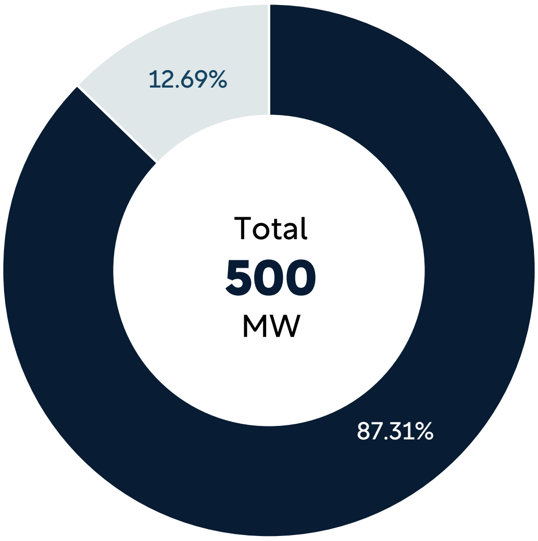
Total IT Capacity

■	39.64%	Live	198 MW
□	5.24%	Under Construction	26 MW
▨	45%	Committed	225 MW
▩	10.12%	Early Stage	51 MW

Colo Availability

■	28%	Vacancy Rate	47 MW





Market Composition

■	87.31%	Colocation	437 MW
□	12.69%	Self-build	63

Includes Live, Under Construction,
Committted and Early Stage

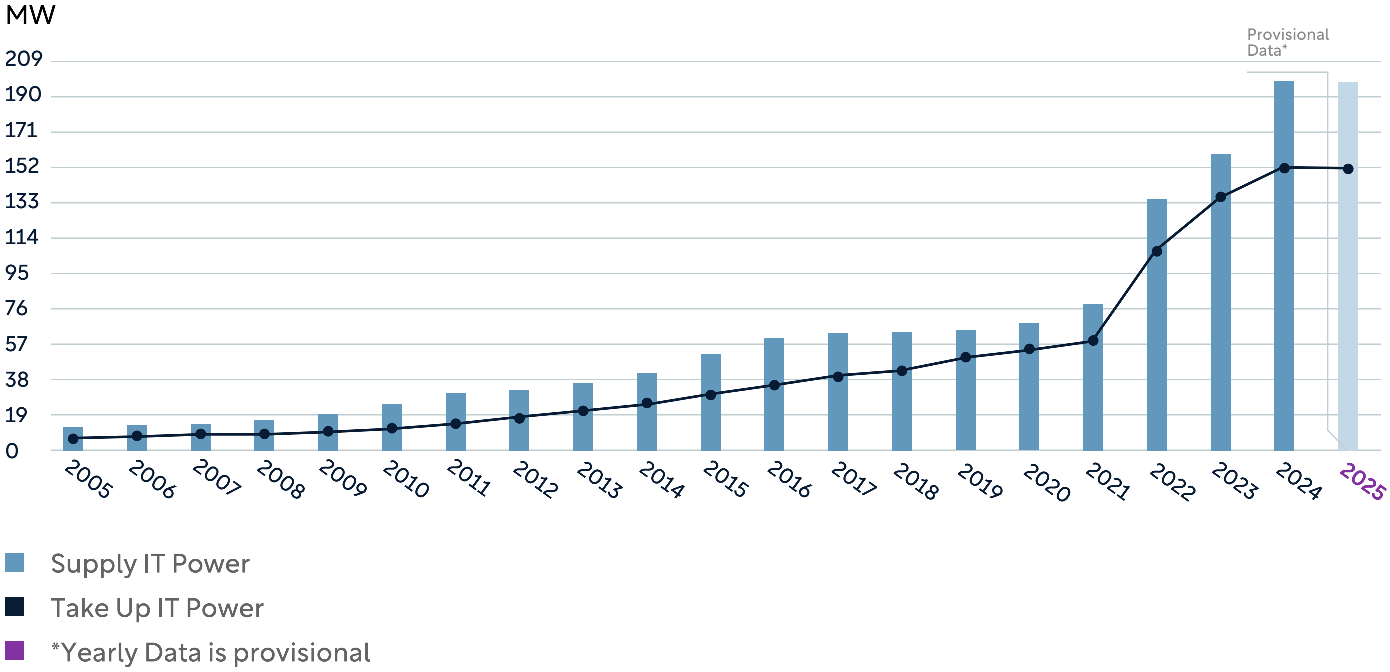
POLAND’S COMPETITIVE EDGE

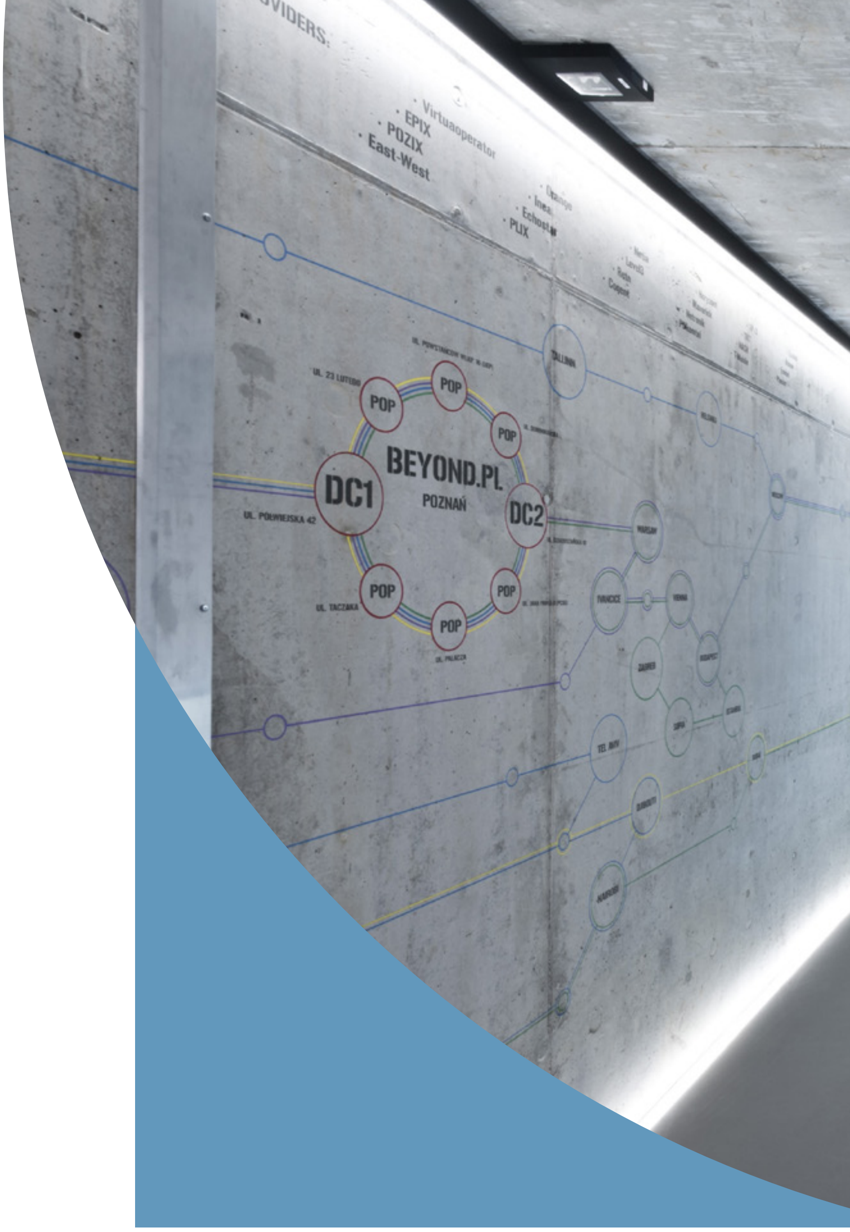
Poland’s data centre market is driven by digitalisation, increased cloud adoption, and AI integration. It has emerged as the leading hub in Central and Eastern Europe, holding the majority of the region’s capacity and outpacing markets such as Romania and the Czech Republic. Poland’s shift towards renewables, targeting over 50% of its energy mix by 2030, makes it increasingly attractive to investors who are now highly prioritising sustainability. As FLAP-D markets face power and regulatory constraints, Poland’s available land, competitive costs, and improving infrastructure make it a compelling alternative for data centre development in Europe.

Kristina Lesnjak, Senior Consultant, DC Byte

CUMULATIVE SUPPLY AND TAKE-UP IN POLAND

Facility Types: Colocation, Self-build
Power Types: Live
Measurement: Cumulative
Time Span: Yearly





"The next initiative we're currently discussing is focused around expedited planning and permitting procedures for data centres," he shares. "There's been a special, streamlined pathway approved by the government for the purpose of developing the National Data Centres (KCPD) project. Having a standard process approved for the wide data centre industry would expedite the country's digitalisation and attract international investors."

With this level of support, Poland is maintaining growth within the EU, which is supported by a highly-skilled workforce across the technology sector. Technical expertise, alongside competitive salary structures, provides a range of operational advantages for data centre operators.

PLDCA is also focused on educating the public about the data centre industry to present its long-term potential for career building and attracting further talent.

Cooperation with the Combined Heat & Energy sector and establishing data centres at the heart of the modern energy ecosystem will present opportunities for qualified engineering and operations staff to transition into the data centre industry. Here, they can use their mission-critical experience to streamline the adoption of large-scale waste heat recovery projects.

"Poland operates the second largest district heating network in Europe, which presents unique opportunities for exploiting the industry synergy, achieving improved data centre energy efficiency and optimum resource utilisation. On top of that, the decarbonisation process of combined heat & power plants releases new, attractive locations for data centre investments with direct access to high voltage grid connections and access to district heating systems."

A strategic edge

Poland's market expansion comes as hyperscale data centre companies seek locations that can accommodate high-density AI workloads while meeting environmental commitments.

The data centre market in Poland has reached 180MW of live capacity and has maintained a compound annual growth rate of 19.8% since 2020. Hyperscalers like Google Cloud, AWS and Microsoft

WRONG
ANSWER
CONNECTIVITY

WATCH NOW

How the Polish Data Centre Association is making data centres cool

Inside a Beyond.pl data centre

Azure have established their presence in Poland since the COVID-19 pandemic, including Microsoft's own built data centre campus in Warsaw. The company has further strengthened their commitment to the region with its February 2025 announcement of a €720 million (US$753.96m) investment to develop data centre infrastructure in Poland.

PLDCA's market analytics partners project data centre capacity will reach 500MW by 2030 and 1200MW by 2034, positioning Poland as a strong European Tier 2 location.

"The market has experienced explosive growth in recent years, having quickly developed from telco and retail colocation to a strong European Tier 2 market contender," Piotr explains. "When combined with the passion and skills demonstrated by the companies associated with PLDCA, it's a truly inspiring initiative to lead. Our ambition for proving the market worth to the data centre community is very strong."

The market divides between local operators including Atman, Beyond.pl, 3S / Play and Polcom, alongside international providers such as Data4 Group, Equinix, EdgeConneX, Vantage Data Centers, T-Mobile and Orange.

Currently, the city of Warsaw hosts 80% of the country's data centre capacity, with Poznan and Krakow emerging as secondary locations.

Development projects of PLDCA members include Atman's WAW-3 facility in Warsaw (720mEUR), Data4 Group's Warsaw development (500mEUR) and Beyond.pl's 150MW AI-Ready Campus in Poznan.

Supporting the energy transition

While investing in renewable energy infrastructure, Poland has successfully been growing its data centre industry. PLDCA is also eager to challenge the world's perception of the country as coal-based and unsustainable.

"It takes a few years to develop a large scale data centre campus from site acquisition, through permitting and construction process till Ready For Service stage," he notes. "So for an investor considering new locations for its data centre campus, a forward looking perspective is more appropriate."

Poland continues on its steep pathway towards decarbonisation, aiming at 50% lower CO2 emissions vs. 2023 by 2030 with 72% green energy, including natural gas. The country rapidly

“OUR AMBITIONS FOR PROVING THE MARKET WORTH TO THE DATA CENTRE COMMUNITY IS VERY STRONG”

SYLWIA PYŚKIEWICZ,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
EQUINIX POLSKA

moves away from coal-based generation and is instead investing in renewables like PV and wind power, including the development of off-shore wind farms in the Baltic Sea.

“The power generation potential of the Polish Baltic Sea shoreline is estimated at 33GW, one of the biggest in Europe, which when fully utilised could cover approximately 50% of total power demand in the country. The investments in progress aim at delivering 6 GW capacity by 2030 and total of 18 GW by 2040.” Piotr adds “Energy generation systems require a fine balance between the emissions profile and power availability – securing the base load demand in periods of limited sun and wind exposure. For base-load security, the country is investing in natural gas as well as nuclear power generation, with the country’s strategic goal to reduce CO2 emission of energy systems by 98% till 2040.”

Nuclear power, with 93% public support (based on the latest survey from the Ministry of Industrialization) forms a strategic part of the country’s decarbonisation pathway. The nuclear power development pipeline includes 6-9GW power plant in the North of Poland, with a €15 billion (US$15.7bn) budget having recently been approved by the government, in addition to a second location being discussed in the centre of Poland and a fleet of 24no. BWRX-300 small modular reactors scattered across the country.

“What we’re also highlighting is that location choice should not be single dimensional, emissions-centric only, as data centres are a complex power and thermal management ecosystem," Piotr shares. "For example, countries that benefit from the frequent sun exposure, like the south of Europe, suffer from significantly higher ambient temperature profiles, increasing the PUE and overall energy consumption of data centres. That same high ambient temperature profile is limiting the heat reuse opportunities."

He adds: "When looking at the big picture, Poland offers a competitive mix of new, low emissions energy generation and power transmission assets, great PUE – stemming from the lowest annual average ambient temperature in Europe outside of the Nordics – and huge heat-reuse opportunities with the second largest district heating network in Europe.

"The demand for green data centres aligns with the country's strategic direction for energy and digital transformation, creating a perfect storm for sustainable growth."

Future-proofing European data centres

PLDCA is advocating for expedited planning and permitting procedures for data centres, similar to processes approved for the National Data Centres (KCPD) project. The association is also collaborating with organisations like Forum Energii, an independent Polish think tank, to facilitate workshops between data centre operators and energy (heat & power) utilities.

"The mission of the association allows companies to think strategically towards the overall benefit of the market,

"WHEN IT COMES TO AI TRAINING, THE MAINLAND EUROPE POSITION OF POLAND ALLOWS IT TO SERVE THE WHOLE CONTINENT"

WOJCIECH STRAMSKI,
CEO,
BEYOND.PL

Wojciech
Stramski,
CEO,
Beyond.pl

“POLAND IS OFTEN PERCEIVED THROUGH THE LENS OF HIGH CO2 EMISSIONS OF ITS ELECTRICITY GENERATION SYSTEM”

PIOTR KOWALSKI,
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
POLISH DATA CENTRE
ASSOCIATION

with their individual companies leveraging from the growth,” Piotr shares.

Like the rest of the world, the development of AI-specific infrastructure has emerged as a focus area for Polish data centres. For instance, site selection for AI facilities prioritises access to high-voltage grid connections, low-emission power generation, competitive electricity costs and heat reuse opportunities.

“Having great engineering partners in the association, both international design power-houses as well as strong local experts, allows PLDCA to identify and promote cutting edge technologies benefiting from the AI revolution,” Piotr explains.

“PLDCA collaborates with the Ministry of Digitalisation to support and facilitate the development of AI Factories in Poland as well as ensuring the clarity and focus for required infrastructure development in the ‘2035 Digitalisation Strategy for Poland’ document, which is currently being developed.”

Additionally, cybersecurity is a significant priority for Poland, with the Polish Ministry of Digitalisation working closely with the PLDCA to identify and implement the necessary

Data4 team
in Jawczyce

steps to ensure full security of Polish data centre assets, which is especially critical when considering the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and EU-related cyber threats.

“We are also highlighting the importance of combined public-private efforts to meet the scale and pace of the emerging AI revolution,” Piotr adds.

To support Poland further on its digital transformation journey, the PLDCA has launched the Gateway Poland conference, with its first edition scheduled for 8th April 2025. This event will be to facilitate dialogue between industry stakeholders, policy makers and business representatives.

“What we’ve noticed is that from the outsider perspective Poland is often perceived through the lens of high CO2 emissions of its electricity generation system,” Piotr says. “As much as it has been true historically, this fact may lead to false conclusions when considering medium and long-term data centre investments.” says Piotr.

“Poland is a cool place for data centres and we hope to have as many people as possible to leverage the country’s potential to meet the growing infrastructure needs of digital Europe.” ○

Metrobloks:

Defining **AI-Ready** in Urban Metro Ma

metrobloks

Data Centres
rkets

metrobloks

WRITTEN BY:
AMBER
JACKSON

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS
VAUGHAN

Ernest Popescu, Founder & CEO of Metrobloks, shares how Metrobloks is building future-led urban data centres that cater towards AI and sustainability

Much of the data centre industry is currently chasing single-tenant wholesale data centres. These facilities are built to suit hyperscale demands, whilst demonstrating there is a large enterprise customer market that is currently underserved.

Metrobloks is one company eager to fill this gap in the market. As an emerging data centre developer, the company seeks to bring urban metro infrastructure capacity and offer something more unique.

“I really wanted to create the data centre company that customers wish existed – that I, as a former customer, wished had existed when I was buying and procuring capacity for AWS and Facebook,” says Ernest Popescu, Founder and CEO of Metrobloks.

Ernest explains that the data centre industry is largely commoditised, with Metrobloks instead opting to move away from following the rest of the pack.

“I’m passionate about the long-term creative thinking required to adapt and stay ahead of evolving customer requirements in a resource-constrained environment,” he says.

“In founding Metrobloks, I wanted to harness the invaluable experience of passionate industry experts who will buy,

Ernest Popescu,
Founder & CEO,
Metrobloks

metroblok
EDDIE BAUER

ERNEST POPESCU

TITLE: **FOUNDER & CEO**

Ernest Popescu is the founder and CEO of Metrobloks, a data centre company focused on urban, future proof and scalable facilities. His extensive background includes leadership roles at tech giants where he managed global data centre development—overseeing 10GW of capacity at AWS and leading Meta's AI/ML infrastructure expansion. At Iron Mountain, Ernest developed 2GW of opportunities across US and European markets. Holding a Mechanical Engineering degree from McGill University, Ernest speaks three languages and splits his time between Seattle and Montreal with his family.

build and operate data centres with a relentless focus on reliability, efficiency, sustainability and customer obsession."

Redefining the data centre business strategy

The traditional approach to data centre development focuses on large-scale facilities in areas with power and land. However, the rise of edge computing and AI inference applications has created new requirements for urban deployments. This shift presents opportunities for providers who can navigate the complexities of metropolitan infrastructure development.

Ernest founded Metrobloks less than a year ago to build and operate data centres in urban, largely populated markets that currently have very little data centre infrastructure supply inventory.

Metrobloks has developed a unique approach to modular and scalable data centres, which aims to enhance performance for businesses, but also to significantly increase access to high-performance computing (HPC) at scale.

To achieve its goal of reinventing how data centres are built and operated, Metrobloks is integrating modularity, sustainability, software and AI to help data centre infrastructure perform to its maximum potential.

"We want to democratise data centre capacity," he explains. "It's been an incredible ride so far. As former customers ourselves, knowing what other customers are looking for makes us unique. We know we are on the right track when customers repeatedly and apologetically ask us if we understand that they "only" need 1MW or 0.5MW of capacity and we reassure them that we do understand and that they are who our product is targeting. The market response has been really rewarding and validating."

Many of Metrobloks' employees are, like Ernest, former executives for technology giants like Google, Facebook and Microsoft. Bringing Paul Churnock on board as Vice President of Engineering, Ernest says, has helped the company develop future-proof data centres. This has been achieved by focusing on two

aspects: modularity – standard and repeatable block size, and flexibility, enabling a switch between air and liquid cooling with a swap of the AHU with a CDU.

"He has incorporated more flexibility into our cooling designs, meaning we're able to switch relatively seamlessly with minimal cost between air and liquid cooling," he says. "Most other developers either come from former developers or are led by salespeople, whereas we're actually a team of former hyperscale customers who have come together to bring a solution to market that our customers can appreciate and relate to."

He adds: "The collective data centre infrastructure experience of our team is over a hundred years, which is impressive given that it's such a nascent and emergent industry. I'm incredibly excited about what we're building."

Building for the future

Metrobloks is currently looking at urban plots of land for data centres with the aim of giving them a new lease of life.

"These sites are in industrial areas next to high voltage transmission or substations and we're bringing state-of-the-art secure data centre infrastructure capacity to these locations that would otherwise not have had a revitalisation," Ernest explains. "Take Miami as an example, because it's a market we're very active in – we hope to bring a little over 15MWs of critical IT capacity to the Miami market. Given the recent efficiencies disrupting the AI market smaller facilities are in a unique position to make a larger impact.

"What that means is that our 15MWs in Miami is equivalent to 150MWs in a remote location. With the added benefit that our Miami property can flex between AI/ML training and AI Inference with a reach of eight million people within a couple of milliseconds."

As AI workload demands continue to swell, Metroblok's approach to scalable data centres seeks to invest in MEP solutions that are future proof.

> “I really wanted to create the data centre company that customers wish existed – that I as a former customer wished had existed”

ERNEST POPESCU,
FOUNDER AND CEO,
METROBLOKS

> “With our Miami property, we can reach eight million people within a couple of milliseconds. That is powerful”

ERNEST POPESCU,
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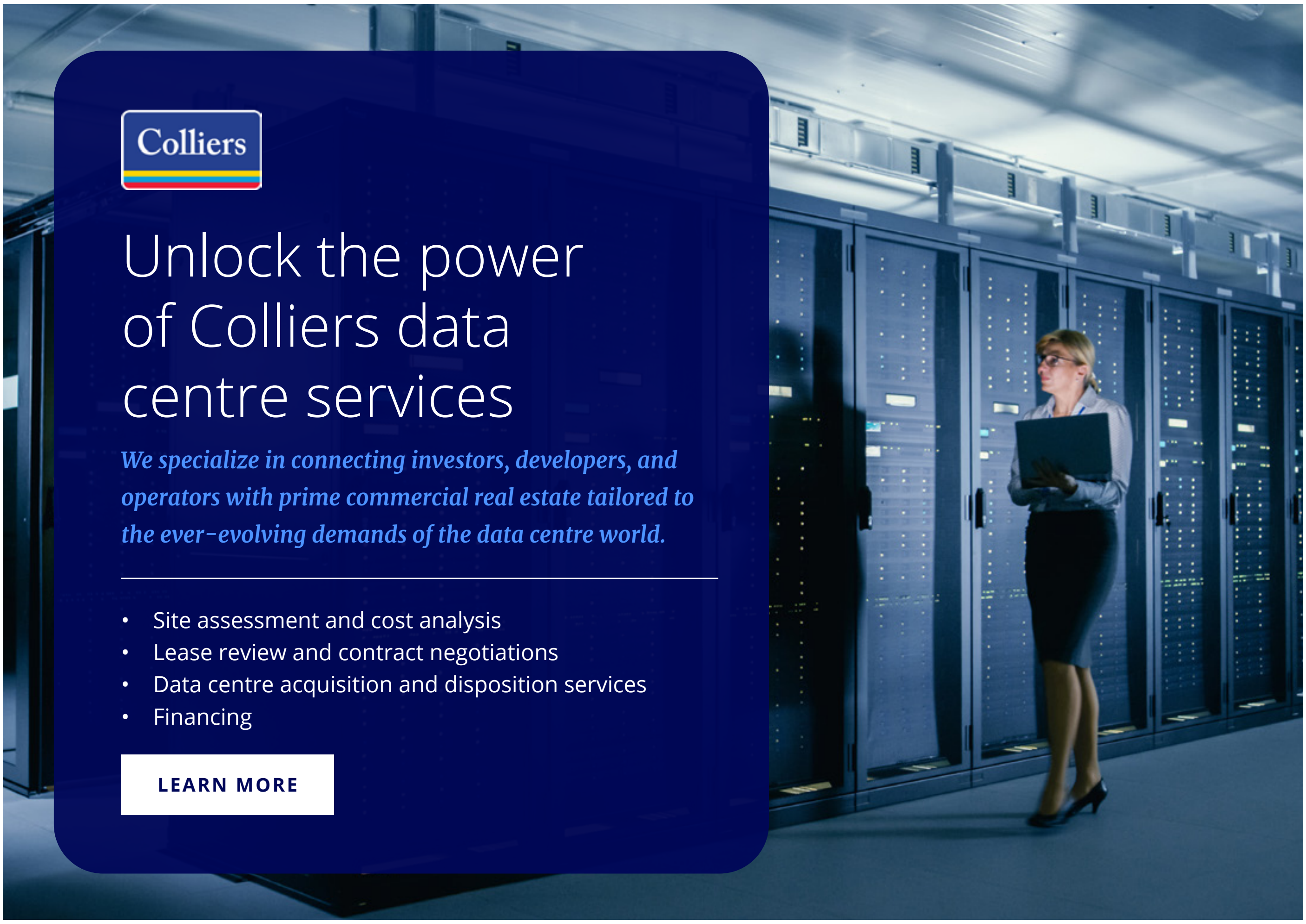
METROBLOKS



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How Metrobloks is Defining a New Era for Data Centre Innovation

"As the industry evolves, particularly in AI, machine learning (AI/ML) and inference/reasoning, we're building in urban metro markets with IXP-like connectivity as close to IXPs as possible. This brings the best of both worlds where customers can flex their workloads from AI/ML to Inference and reach a huge population seamlessly."

As data centre racks continue to densify, the hardware is continuing to require a liquid cooling solution. For Ernest, the challenge is predicting where the data centre industry will settle, hence Metrobloks building flexibility into its designs.

"Unless data centre developers have built in the capabilities to flex between air and liquid, then they're bringing an obsolete data centre to market," Ernest explains. "The beauty of what we build is that every one of our lineups and data halls has the rough-in built to be able to support switching from air to liquid.

"Whether it's direct-to-chip or immersion cooling is irrelevant because what we're going to be delivering is the liquid cooling solution. That vehicle will be able to support racks as they continue to densify indefinitely – we're intentionally bringing capacity that will have a long runway into the future."

Leading with a sustainable ethos

Part of that forward-thinking mindset means that Metrobloks is building sustainability into its data centres as a foundational principle.

"Our facilities are designed with advanced liquid cooling systems capable of supporting up to 150 kw per rack liquid to the chip and beyond that via an immersion cooling solution," Ernest shares. "That technology not only delivers industry leading energy efficiency but also reduces water usage and overall carbon emissions.

"In an era where environmental responsibility is crucial, Metrobloks ensures that the high-density workloads can be managed sustainably without compromising performance. We are looking at everything we build being LEED or BREEAM certified to emphasise that sustainability. Additionally, wherever and whenever possible we look to capture rejected heat and reuse and recycle it so the local community can benefit from it."

The company is seeking to provide a positive impact to urban communities by increasing access to HPC at scale. Part of this strategy is by revitalising brownfield sites, which involves recycling real estate assets into data centres.

"From a carbon emissions footprint perspective, the best thing we can hope to do is to give existing assets, industrial land in urban areas or brownfield sites a second life," Ernest says. "Our primary focus is to make sure Metrobloks stays true to its ethos and its go-to market strategy, whilst continuing to innovate to make sure the data centre infrastructure we bring to market staves off obsolescence for as long as possible.

"Sustainability and innovation go hand in hand. To claim being sustainable, you must continue to innovate. The last thing we want to do is bring something to market that won't have a long runway. So that requires a long term innovative mindset and that to me is really what's most sustainable."

By the Numbers:

15MW

Planned critical IT capacity Metrobloks aims to bring to the Miami market

150kW

Power supported per rack in Metrobloks' facilities with liquid to the chip cooling system. Capable of higher density with a compatible immersion cooling solutions

80MWs

Pipeline opportunities under contract

42MWs

First European opportunity in Milan, Italy

The importance of collaboration

Ernest is eager to emphasise that Metrobloks' partnerships are essential to powering the future of data centre design. The company prides itself on its range of partnerships that operate across the industry, including the likes of LandGate, Colliers and RGV.

"Data centre development relies on collaborative expertise, it's a team sport," he says. "It requires so many partnerships with diverse functional skills, which is one of the reasons I personally enjoy it so much.

One such partnership is with Colliers: a global diversified professional services and investment management company which operates through three industry-leading platforms – Real Estate Services, Engineering, and Investment Management.

"Jim Tsaknis from Colliers is wonderful and is a technologist as well as a broker who understands data centres," Ernest says. "He's been a great advocate for me personally and a wonderful partner as we try to continue to grow our pipeline of sites."

The company also partners with LandGate, a leading provider of data solutions for site selection, origination, development, financing and market analysis of US renewable energy and infrastructure projects, which includes data centres.

Vanderweil Engineering RGV is another such partner – they are a mission critical engineering services firm with a very customer centric approach who have designed over 2GWs of data centre projects.

"I've been fortunate to count Jim Gikas Managing Director, Daniel Bodenski and Paul Corrado as great partners and subject matter experts I can call on," Ernest shares.

"All of our partners have all been incredible champions, with their mission critical expertise, delivering every single time."

Looking ahead, the future is bright for Metrobloks. In May 2024, the company incorporated and subsequently raised capital from Current Equity Partners with the backing of Serena Capital. It has also started looking to convert customer interest into papered documents such as preleases, LOIs and MoUs.

**From left to right:
Ryan Shea, SVP Real Estate;
Darcy Nothnagle, VP
Economic Development;
Paul Churnock, VP EPC (Engineering,
Procurement, and Construction);
Ernest Popescu, Founder and CEO**

The company has put four sites under exclusive control and has closed on its first site, with the funding team led by PJ Fielding, a board member and Vice Chair of Capital Markets, who helped the company close on its first land acquisition.

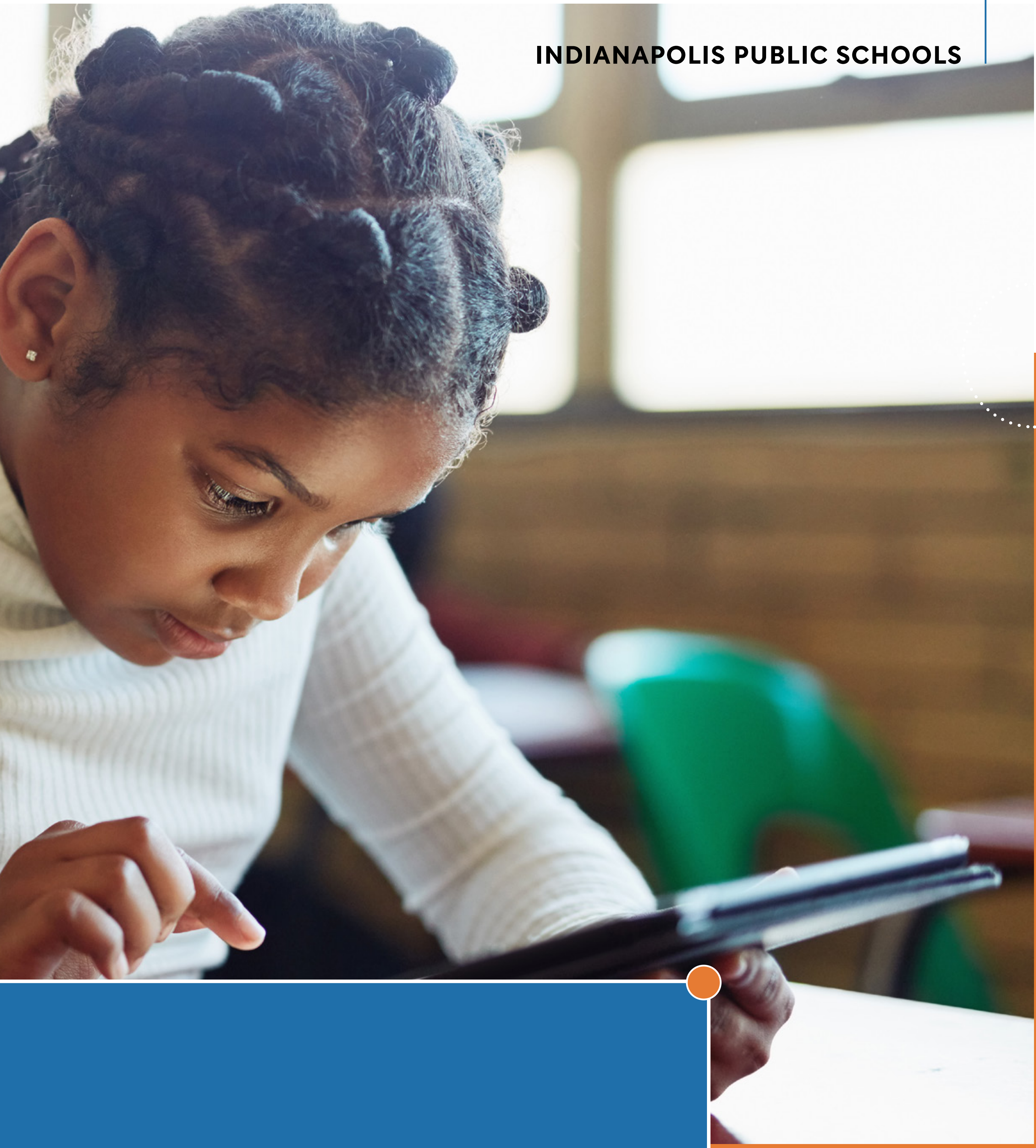
Ernest adds: "I'm excited to announce that, over the next few months, we will have signed an agreement with an institutional investor in Europe, which is going to help us create a European entity and continue to grow our business. We've had similar interest in the US and hope to announce a similar partnership in North America.

"What's next for us is to continue to do what we've been doing, which is focusing on bringing great sites to metro markets with a large population reach, finding institutional capital partners that share our vision and ambition and continue to grow the business. All of that means we will need to continue hiring world-class talent like what we have assembled so far."

He adds: "I'm incredibly excited about the future as we build foundational data centre infrastructure and eventually work our way up the value chain by delivering platforms, software, bare metal and GPU as services, in the near future. The vision is to become a fully integrated technology company. But it all starts with that first data centre." ○

IPS REBUILDING EDUCATION THR CLOUD TRANSFO

INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS



ROUGH
ORMATION

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MARCUS LAW

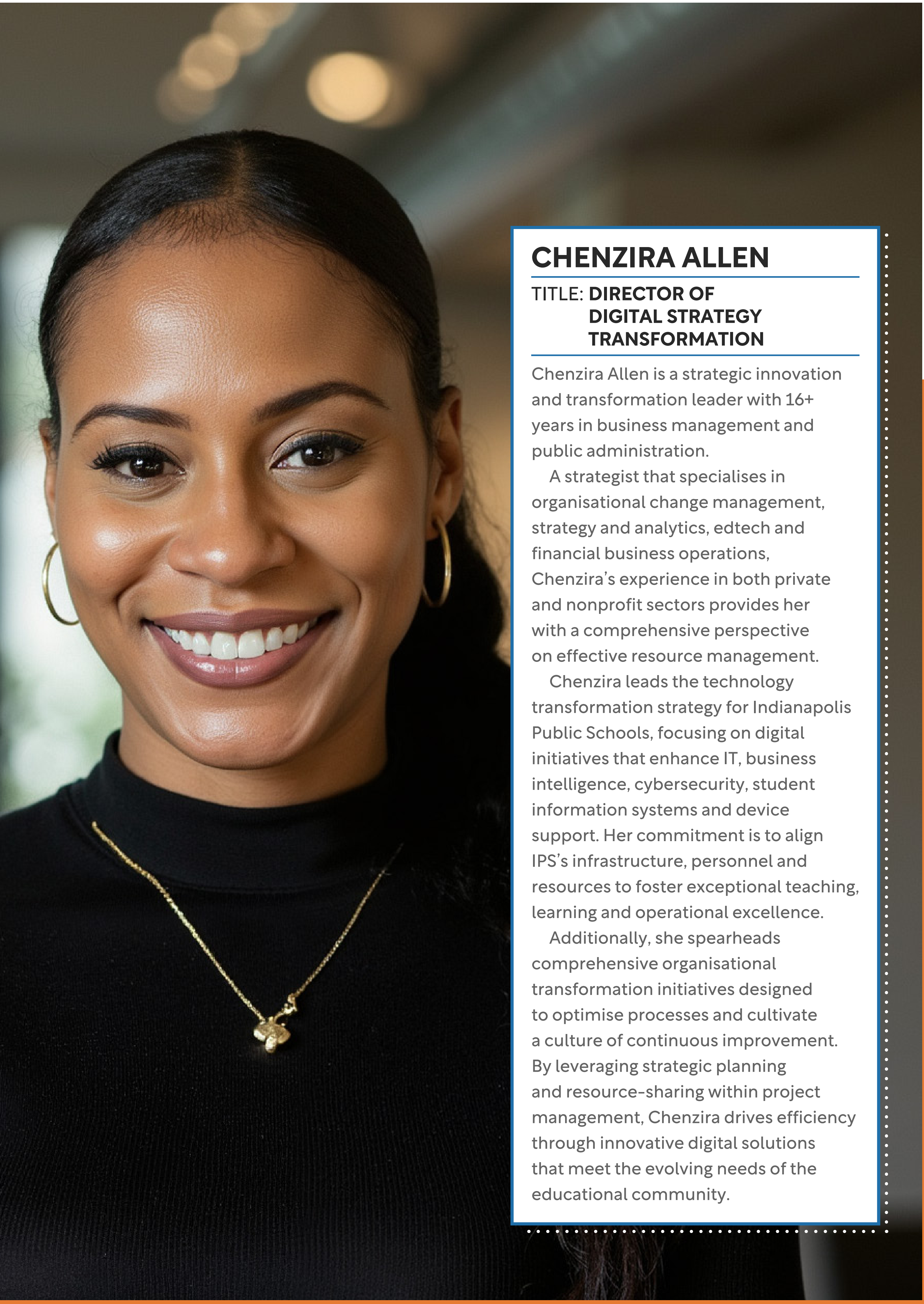
PRODUCED BY:
OLIVER REEK

Indianapolis Public Schools' *Chenzira Allen* is leading a district-wide digital transformation to restructure education delivery for its 30,000 students

American public education stands at a digital crossroads. School districts nationwide face mounting pressure to modernise infrastructure while addressing persistent educational inequities, all within the constraints of public funding. The challenge is particularly acute for urban districts serving diverse populations across varied socioeconomic conditions.

Digital transformation in education requires more than adding computers to classrooms or updating administrative software. It demands a reimagining of how technology integrates with teaching methods, administrative processes and student support systems. For many districts, this transformation collides with the reality of ageing infrastructure, complex governance requirements and the inherent challenges of implementing change across established institutions.

Against this backdrop, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) has embarked on a comprehensive digital journey that could serve as a blueprint for districts nationwide. The district is executing a transformation that extends beyond technology implementation to address educational equity across its communities. The district's 'Rebuilding Stronger' initiative aims to reorganise the



CHENZIRA ALLEN

TITLE: **DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY TRANSFORMATION**

Chenzira Allen is a strategic innovation and transformation leader with 16+ years in business management and public administration.

A strategist that specialises in organisational change management, strategy and analytics, edtech and financial business operations, Chenzira's experience in both private and nonprofit sectors provides her with a comprehensive perspective on effective resource management.

Chenzira leads the technology transformation strategy for Indianapolis Public Schools, focusing on digital initiatives that enhance IT, business intelligence, cybersecurity, student information systems and device support. Her commitment is to align IPS's infrastructure, personnel and resources to foster exceptional teaching, learning and operational excellence.

Additionally, she spearheads comprehensive organisational transformation initiatives designed to optimise processes and cultivate a culture of continuous improvement. By leveraging strategic planning and resource-sharing within project management, Chenzira drives efficiency through innovative digital solutions that meet the evolving needs of the educational community.

entire school system while modernising outdated infrastructure to meet the needs of a diverse student population.

With 30,000 students speaking more than 15 languages, IPS faces challenges common to urban school districts but approaches them with a strategy that balances technological advancement with public sector constraints. The district's transformation centres on creating four educational zones with equivalent offerings, all of which is supported by cloud technology that enables new teaching methods.

"Right now, the district is undertaking one of the largest initiatives that IPS has ever had," says Chenzira Allen, Director of Digital Strategy Transformation at IPS. "IPS superintendent, Dr Aleesia Johnson, has prioritised equality for our children, and the Rebuilding Strong initiative reflects this vision by redesigning the entire district into four zones, each providing equal educational opportunities."

Infrastructure limitations drive cloud migration

The necessity for change emerged from a practical assessment of the district's ageing data centre, which could no longer support modern educational technology requirements. IPS recognised that continuing with outdated infrastructure would increase operational costs while limiting their ability to implement new educational platforms.

"New technology with outdated operations leads to increased expenses," explains Chenzira. "Our ageing data centre no longer met modern demands. Today, storing data in the cloud offers a more adaptable environment that is constant yet dynamic, scalable and capable of tasks impossible with on-premises infrastructure."

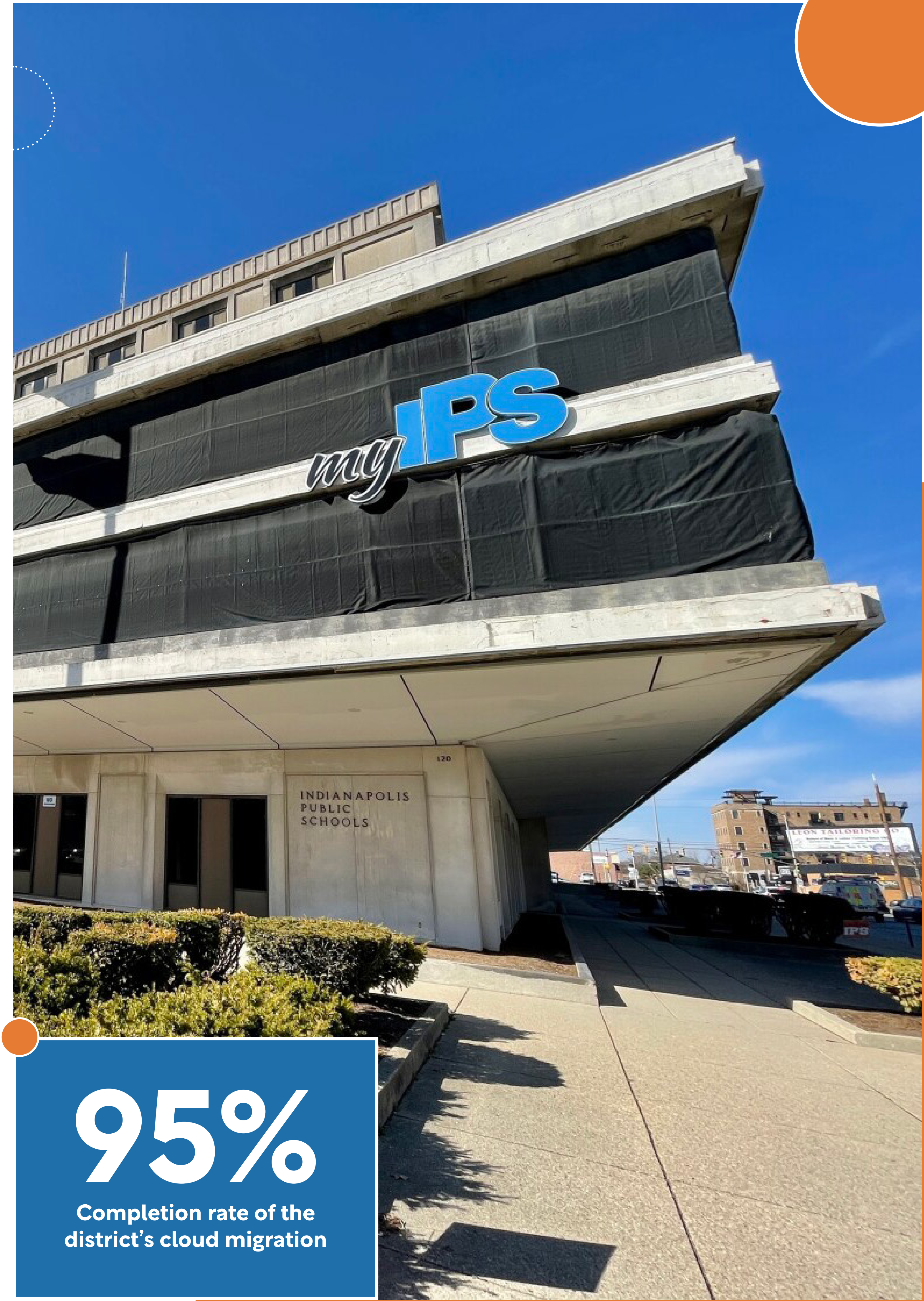
> **"New technology, old operations equals expense"**
>
> **CHENZIRA ALLEN,**
> DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY TRANSFORMATION,
> INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

This realisation pushed the district to invest in cloud infrastructure despite budget constraints typical in the public education sector. The migration to Microsoft Azure has reached 95% completion, with plans to achieve 96% soon.

"It was a costly decision," Chenzira acknowledges, "but it was necessary to give schools and teachers the agility to innovate and reimagine classroom instruction."

The district's approach acknowledges the financial limitations of public education. "In education, we don't have the same level of funding as the private sector. So, we must make the most of what we have and be responsible stewards of our resources," says Chenzira.

IPS faces additional complexity due to its public sector status and scale. "Our process is unique because we're building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95%

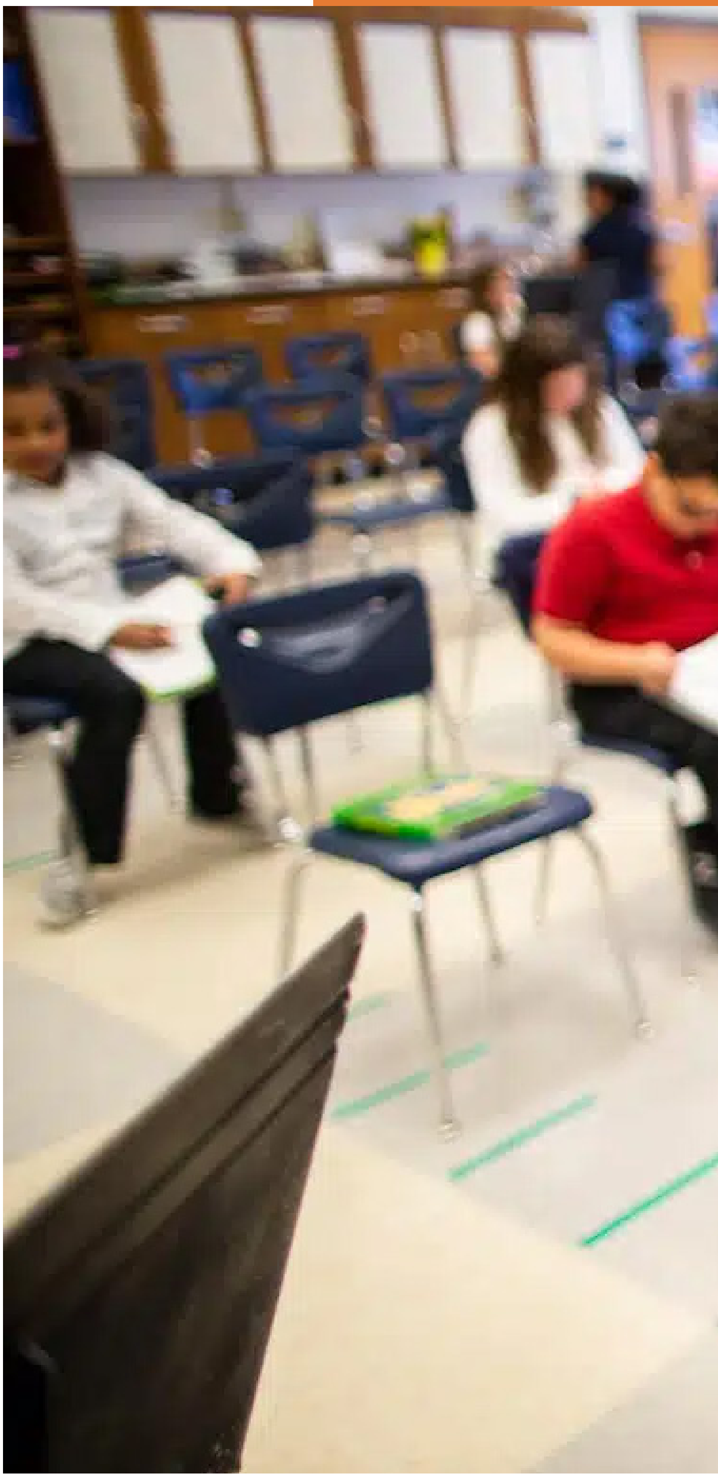
Completion rate of the district's cloud migration

30,000

Students served by Indianapolis Public Schools

around an existing structure rather than starting from scratch," Chenzira explains. "As a school district and a nonprofit, we must also adhere to established policies."

This complexity influences technology selection, driving the district toward platforms that can function independently. "We intentionally select platforms that minimise the need for extensive APIs and isolated systems," Chenzira notes. "Our approach is strategic – ensuring solutions integrate seamlessly rather than forcing them together. We don't have the luxury of one-off solutions."



Educational equity through technology

The Rebuilding Stronger initiative places educational equity at its core, aiming to standardise opportunities across the district that were previously distributed unevenly. Each zone will offer STEM programs, Montessori education and arts education – options that certain areas lacked before.

"Equity remains a major driving force in our district – it's essential," Chenzira states. "With 30,000 students, representing over 10 religious backgrounds and more than 15 languages and dialects spoken as a first or second language, we are a uniquely diverse and culturally rich district in the heart of Indiana."

Implementing this vision presents significant timelines, set to unfold through 2028. "This requires us to revamp buildings, close schools, rotate students, and merge schools, and construct new facilities," Chenzira notes. "It's a massive undertaking, but I believe it's ultimately for the betterment of our students."

> **“Equity is still a huge drive within our district. It is essential”**
>
> **CHENZIRA ALLEN,**
> DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY TRANSFORMATION,
> INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The district’s focus on equity extends to digital access and capabilities, recognising technology as a key driver for educational equality. “I believe equitable access is a fundamental right,” Chenzira asserts. “While we may not be able to reshape the world outside the walls of IPS, ensuring that we create equity within the district throughout students’ 12 years of education is absolutely vital. Our goal is to lead by example, ultimately providing our students with the mindset that,

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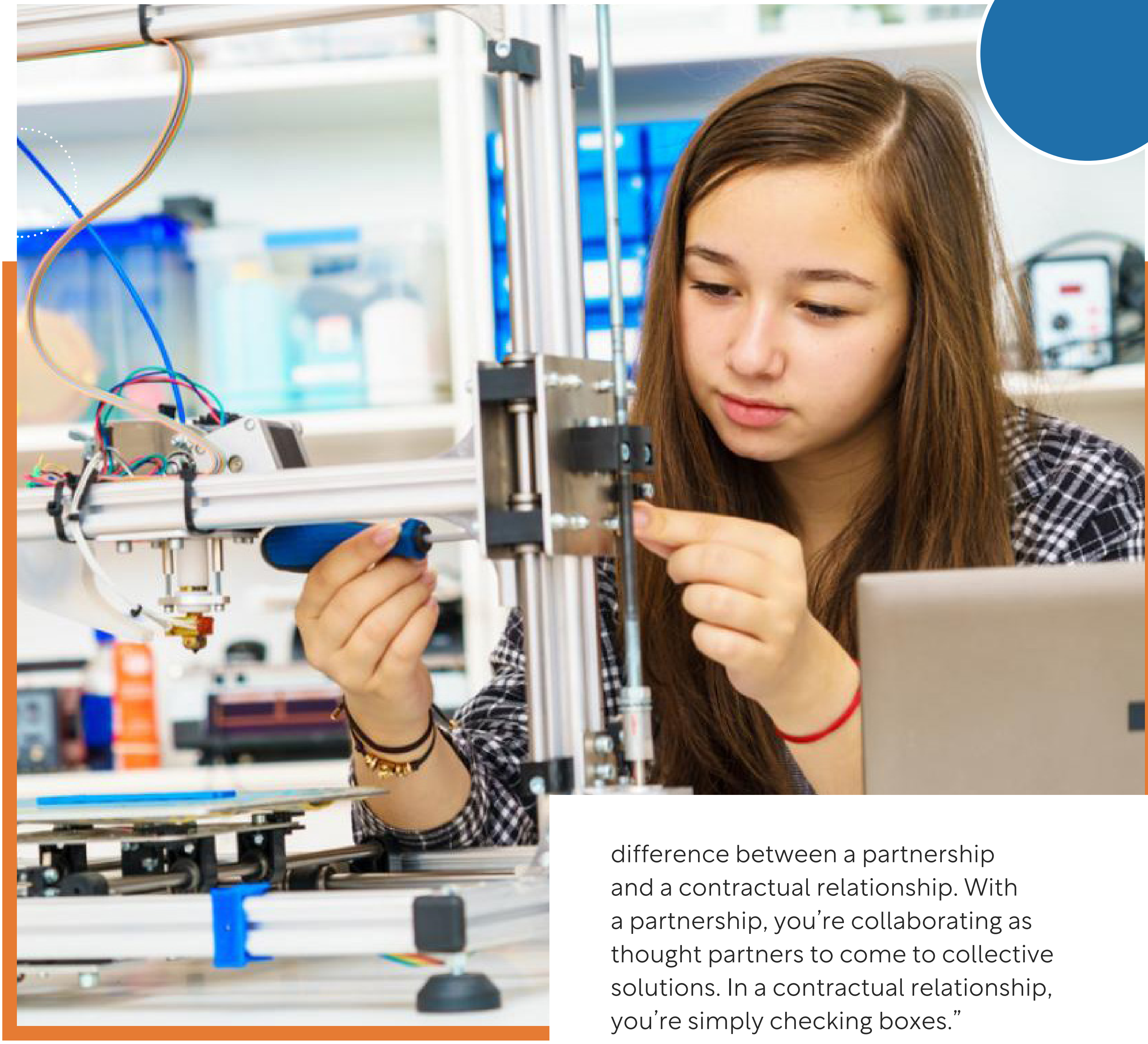


regardless of the challenges, change is possible, and they are capable of shaping the futures they deserve and desire."

Partnership over procurement

The technical aspects of digital transformation at IPS are matched by cultural change requirements. The district emphasises partnership rather than transactional vendor relationships, recognising that implementation success depends on continued collaboration.

"In education, transformation truly hinges on seeking out partnerships," Chenzira explains. "There's a significant difference between a partnership and a contractual relationship. With a partnership, you're collaborating as thought partners to come to collective solutions. In a contractual relationship, you're simply checking boxes."

IPS maintains many collaborative and strategic partnerships, and a standout company supporting the district's data analysis efforts is Dillinger Research and Applied Data Inc.

"Dillinger has been with the district for years," Chenzira says. "They support our analytical work, data mining, scripting – those kinds of tasks. While they weren't directly involved in data centre migration planning, they are intrinsically tied to our day-to-day work and played a key role in ensuring we had clear data tools that translated smoothly into the cloud."

The value of this relationship stems from its adaptability to the district's evolving needs. "The Dillinger team are always willing to roll up their sleeves and assist with any data or analytical obstacles we face in our effort to move forward and create sustainable solutions," Chenzira observes.

The collaborative approach extends to internal stakeholders as IPS works to develop digital literacy among administrative and teaching staff. Success hinges on aligning technological change with cultural change, enabling employees to adopt new work methods.

"We value partners who mindfully engage with our processes. In my opinion, to truly execute meaningful transformation effectively and efficiently, collaboration goes beyond just providing specific deliverables. It involves engaging and offering insights that lead to truly innovative processes and systems, ensuring sustainability for years to come."

Scale creates implementation challenges

The size of IPS creates distinct obstacles that solutions designed for smaller districts often fail to address. "Companies will come in and provide us with solutions designed for a 5,000-student district, but we have 30,000 students," Chenzira explains.

Cultural transformation represents a central hurdle in the implementation process. The human dimension extends beyond technical staff to include teachers, administrators, and support personnel, each requiring different training approaches. "Culture will eat strategy for breakfast on any given morning – the point being, cultivating change is hard." says Chenzira.

WATCH NOW

IPS rebuilding education
through cloud transformation

"Transformation work is a constantly-evolving landscape that requires us to focus not only on processes, projects, and initiatives but also on the people who will be affected by these changes. This work is ultimately about reshaping the mindset within the organisation, ensuring that what we implement works and delivers real benefits."

Technology roadmap for education innovation

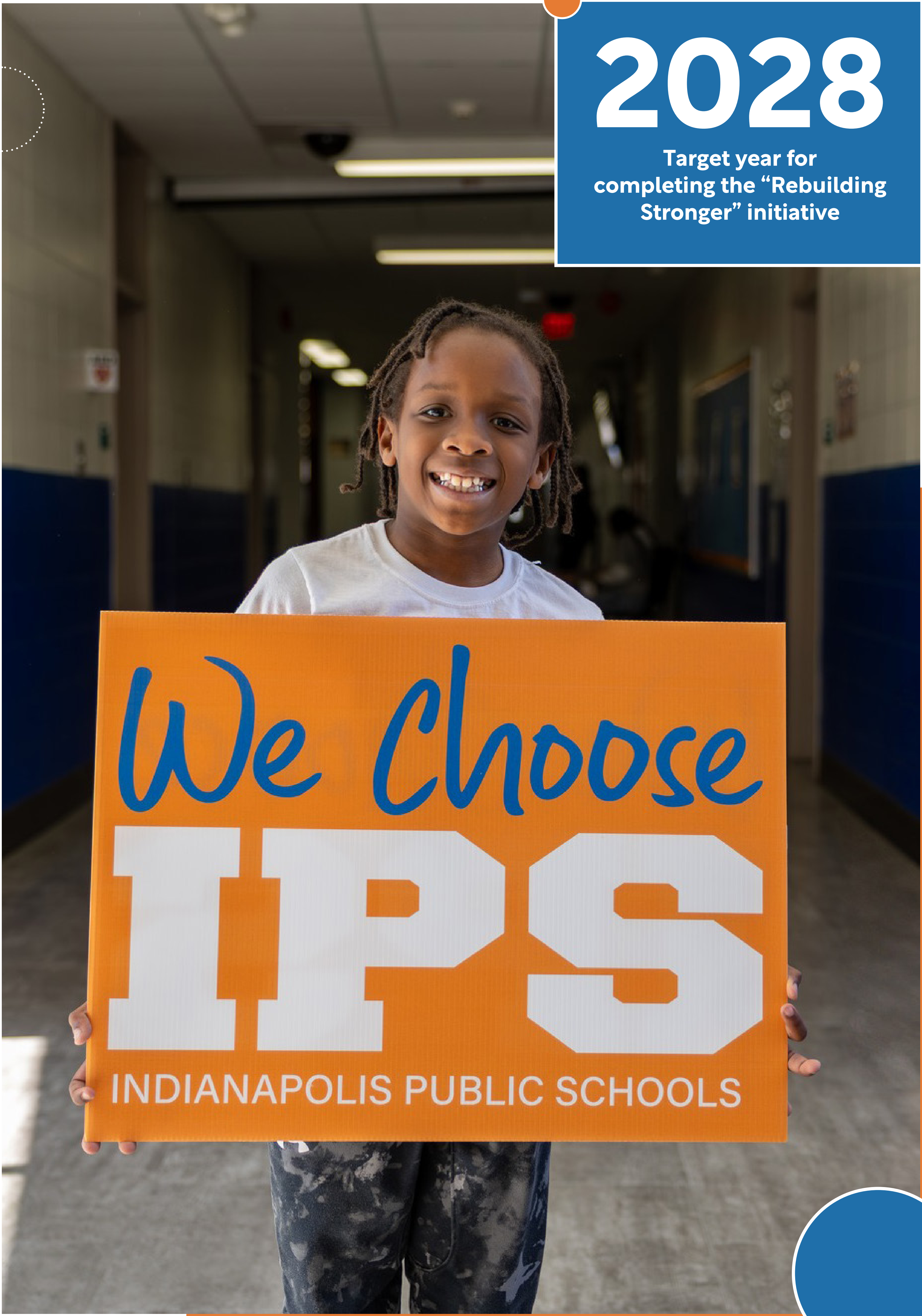
With its technical foundation under construction, IPS is exploring practical applications of emerging technologies in educational contexts. The district plans to implement AI-assisted teaching tools with careful security consideration. "LLMs can pose a challenge in the tech world when it comes to security, but they also offer the opportunity to reimagine how we teach," says Chenzira.

IPS is investigating personalised learning platforms alongside virtual and augmented reality applications. "We're particularly focused on personalised learning platforms – the ability for adaptive software to cater to individual learning needs," Chenzira explains.

"For our students who learn differently, we're exploring new ways to collect and analyse data to assist with their learning

2028

Target year for completing the "Rebuilding Stronger" initiative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> **“Culture will eat strategy on any given morning, and trying to cultivate change is hard”**
>
> **CHENZIRA ALLEN,**
> DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL STRATEGY TRANSFORMATION,
> INDIANAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Chenzira Allen,
Director of Digital Strategy Transformation,
Indianapolis Public Schools

– gathering grades and feedback from teachers and automating this process within the system.

Language learning technologies could broaden curriculum options beyond what we currently offer. “Language learning applications could assist with cultural practices, grammar and languages we might not have access to,” Chenzira notes. “I believe these technologies could enhance student engagement, improve learning and optimise time.”

The infrastructure supports technologies that may not be fully developed yet, keeping the system flexible for future innovations.

“We’ll focus on addressing equity gaps, improving the district’s data processes, expanding our Systems Data Management and Analytics Department and refining our systems,” Chenzira explains. “We need to create tools that align with the analytics, data policies and privacy requirements we must follow.”

For Chenzira, the work transcends technical achievements to fulfil a service mission “You know, I genuinely love this work. Strategy, innovation, transformation and execution extends beyond my professional accomplishments; it is about having an expansive purpose as well.

“It’s easy to go into the private sector,” she reflects, “but there’s a genuine part of me that believes in the greater good, and who better to serve and provide that to, then our children? Although I don’t directly touch the lives of our students, I’m serving something bigger than myself, and I take pride in that.”

HOW SAILPOINT CHARTS A COURS THROUGH AI SECURITY WATER

WRITTEN BY:
MARCUS
LAW

PRODUCED BY:
OLIVER
REEK

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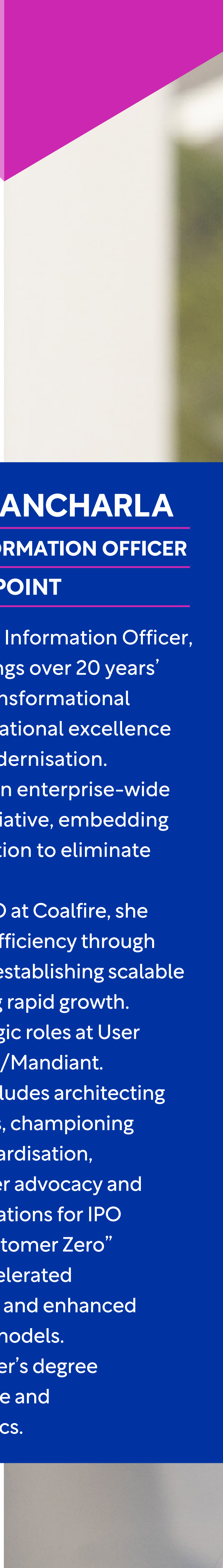

SailPoint CIO Sree Kancharla on how the identity security firm balances technology innovation with protection measures as AI cybersecurity threats evolve

The enterprise security landscape has undergone fundamental shifts in recent years. Traditional perimeter defences have eroded as organisations migrate to cloud services, adopt hybrid work models and integrate third-party vendors into core operations. This evolution has placed identity management at the centre of security strategy for most enterprises.

Identity-based attacks continue to rise, accounting for 64% of all security incidents according to recent research. And with credential compromise the cause of most data breaches, the scale of compromised credential attacks makes identity one of the broadest and most dangerous attack surfaces.

SailPoint has positioned itself at the intersection of innovation and security in the identity management sector. The firm provides unified identity data solutions designed to address the growing complexity of enterprise security challenges in this changing environment.

"Our offerings leverage highly advanced technology, AI and ML to maximise the value received by our customers and streamline their operations to provide a stronger identity security posture," says Sreeveni Kancharla, Chief Information Officer at SailPoint.

SREEVENI KANCHARLA

TITLE: **CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER**

COMPANY: **SAILPOINT**

As SailPoint's Chief Information Officer, Sree Kancharla brings over 20 years' experience as a transformational leader driving operational excellence and enterprise modernisation. She spearheaded an enterprise-wide transformation initiative, embedding intelligent automation to eliminate manual processes.

Previously, as CIO at Coalfire, she improved service efficiency through automation whilst establishing scalable systems supporting rapid growth. She has held strategic roles at User Testing and FireEye/Mandiant.

Sree's impact includes architecting AI-driven strategies, championing international standardisation, advancing customer advocacy and positioning organisations for IPO readiness. Her "Customer Zero" initiatives have accelerated product innovation and enhanced customer-centric models.

She holds a Master's degree in computer science and applied mathematics.

Sreeveni Kancharla,
CIO,
SailPoint

Recent innovations from SailPoint include Machine Identity Security for managing non-human identities and Non-Employee Risk Management solutions for handling third-party identities such as contractors.

With solutions like these, the firm maintains a sharp focus on addressing identity security challenges through unified approaches. “SailPoint remains focused on helping our customers solve their identity security challenges, harnessing the power of unified identity data and a unified identity platform,” Sree notes.

A transformation-focused leadership journey

Sree’s career trajectory to the CIO role was built on a foundation of business transformation expertise. “Throughout my career, I have focused on driving business transformation, scaling IT operations to support organisational expansion and aligning technology with business objectives to increase revenue,” she says.

Her leadership approach centres on transformation and empowering teams to embrace technological innovation. “I believe in inspiring and empowering

teams to embrace change, drive continuous improvement, and proactively adopt AI-powered solutions that enhance both customer and employee experiences."

One of Sree's signature initiatives was implementing a Customer Zero programme during her first year at SailPoint. "I strongly believe in being an internal customer first, which led me to launch the Customer Zero programme within my first year," she explains.

This approach ensured the company used its own solutions internally before deployment to customers.

> **"By using our own solutions internally, we became the voice of the customer"**
>
> SREEVENI KANCHARLA,
> CIO,
> SAILPOINT

"By using our own solutions internally, we became the voice of the customer, enabling us to share real-world learnings, drive continuous refinement, and ensure that our technology truly meets business needs."

SailPoint's digital transformation prioritises identity security

Digital transformation projects face numerous challenges, with security gaps often emerging when security considerations follow rather than guide the process. SailPoint has navigated these challenges by placing identity security at the core of its transformation strategy from the outset.

"As a CIO, digital transformation is more than just implementing new technologies," Sree explains. "It's about fundamentally reshaping how an organisation operates competes and delivers value."

For transformation to succeed, multiple components must work together.

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A Cybersecurity executive goes to the C-suite and Board and asks for more money to buy some new technology or start a new project. They are asked for the business justification for the expenditure. If they do not have one, it will not get funded.

IT Operations is notorious for having a lot of tooling that is the best of breed and fits a particular niche in the technology stack. None of those systems talk to one another, and a Sev1 issue in production is a nightmare to deal with, with no context unified in a single system from all those best of breed solutions. The business is not making money during that Sev1 issue, and that is what the business and Board cares about.

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SAILPOINT HARBOR PILOT: AI-POWERED AGENTS TRANSFORMING IDENTITY SECURITY

SailPoint has unveiled Harbor Pilot, a set of AI-powered digital agents designed to transform identity security operations. The new solution helps identity teams work smarter and respond faster through:

- **Documentation Q&A:** Provides instant access to identity security documentation using conversational prompts
- **Workflows Generator:** Creates optimised security workflows through natural language descriptions

SailPoint also plans to extend identity security to manage AI agents as a new identity type – addressing a growing need as 82% of organisations now utilise AI agents.

Achieving true transformation requires more than just technology: it demands strong executive alignment, business collaboration, effective change management and continuous user engagement from start to finish.

“One of the most critical factors in driving successful digital transformation is executive and business alignment,” Sree asserts.

"Without a shared vision and commitment from leadership, transformation initiatives risk becoming siloed IT projects rather than strategic business drivers.

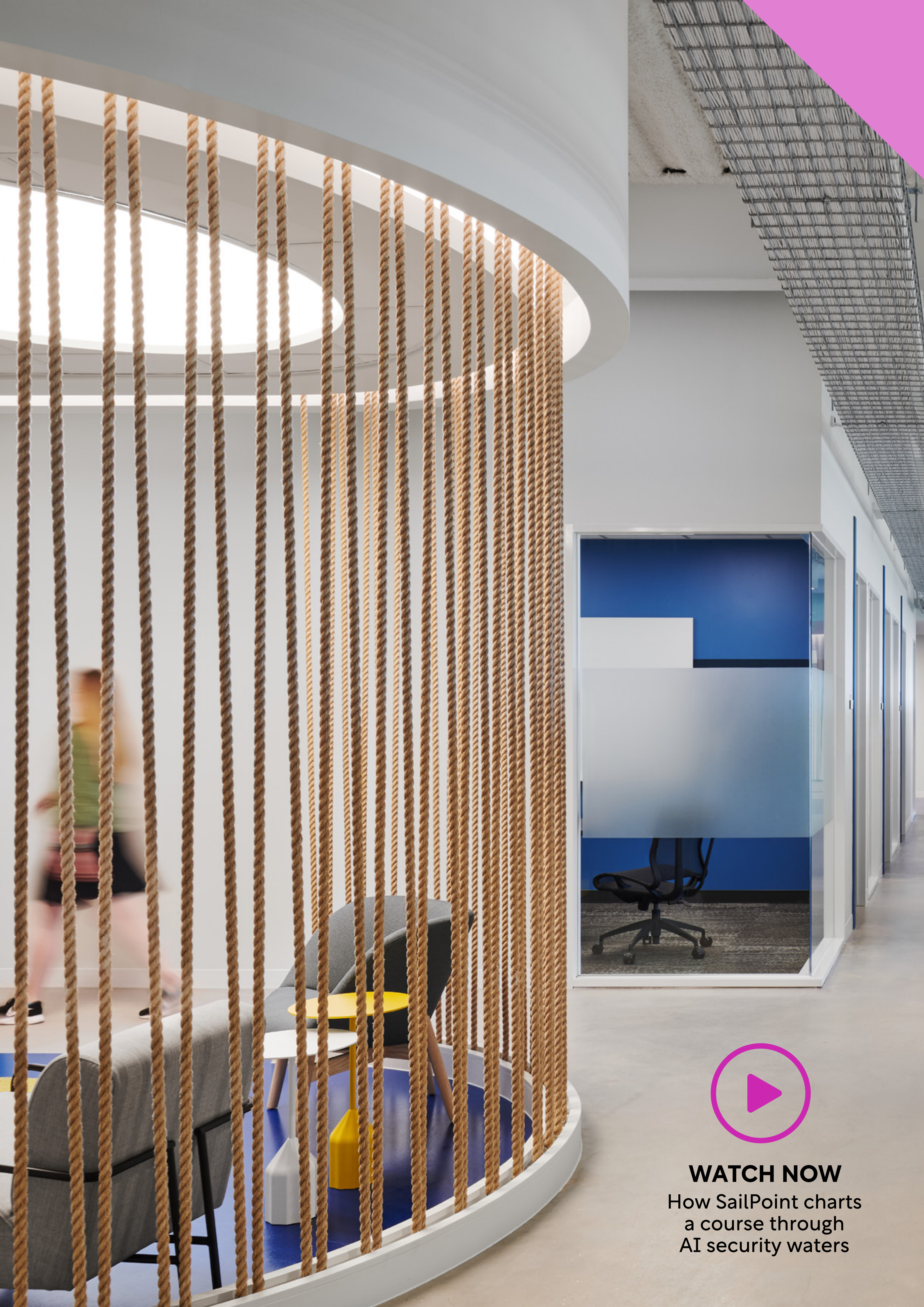
"When executives and business leaders are aligned from the outset, digital initiatives are tied directly to organisational goals, ensuring technology investments deliver tangible business value."

Change management plays an equally vital role in transformation success. SailPoint's approach includes developing strategies that help employees adapt to new processes. "A well-defined change management strategy ensures that employees understand, adopt, and champion new digital processes rather than resist them," she explains.

This human-centred perspective recognises the central role of personnel in transformation efforts. "People, not just technology, are at the heart of transformation, and without proper engagement, even the most sophisticated solutions can fail to achieve their intended impact."

Innovation addresses identity security challenges

The identity security landscape has grown increasingly complex as organisations expand their digital footprints. Machine identities – non-human accounts that enable automated processes and system-to-system communications – present particular challenges for security teams. Amid this increasingly complex attack surface, SailPoint has oriented its innovation strategy to address these evolving challenges.



WATCH NOW

How SailPoint charts a course through AI security waters

> **“AI-driven cybersecurity not only strengthens defenses but also enhances user experiences”**
>
> **SREEVENI KANCHARLA,**
> CIO,
> SAILPOINT

“To paraphrase SailPoint CEO, Mark McClain, we innovate to solve real enterprise security problems our customers are facing, and we do so by listening,” Sree explains. “We listen to the market, the leading voices in our ecosystem and our customers, and we have a deep and clear understanding of where the market is today and where it’s going.”

As Sree describes, SailPoint was an early adopter of AI and machine learning in identity security. Today, the firm’s offerings leverage these technologies to maximise the value received by its customers and streamline their operations to provide a stronger identity security posture.

“We recognise the critical opportunity AI represents to the most scaled and complex enterprise organisations and are committed to partnering with our customers to continue to provide solutions incorporating these advanced technologies to improve identity security at enterprise scale,” she states.

The firm’s AI-based solutions are built with practical business requirements in mind. “Our AI based solutions are scalable, adaptable, and cost-efficient and provide customers with enhanced detection, improved accuracy and efficiency, and an enhanced user experience that enables them to make better decisions faster.”

SailPoint approach balances transformation with security measures

Many enterprises struggle to implement digital initiatives while maintaining security, often treating them as competing priorities. This tension frequently results in either stalled innovation or increased vulnerability. At SailPoint, however, security and transformation are viewed as complementary forces rather than opposing ones, with identity management serving as the bridge between them.

“Handling transformation and security challenges requires a dual focus ensuring seamless business evolution while embedding robust security measures at every step,” Sree explains.

Under her guidance, SailPoint has developed a framework where security – particularly identity security – forms the foundation for transformation efforts. “While digital transformation is about scaling technology, enhancing customer and employee experiences, and driving revenue growth, security – particularly identity security – must be foundational to these efforts,” she says.

The company’s approach begins with executive alignment, ensuring leadership shares a cohesive vision before projects launch.

“Successful transformation requires executive and business alignment from the start, ensuring IT initiatives directly support revenue growth, operational efficiency and customer experience,” Sree emphasises.

User acceptance represents another critical success factor in SailPoint’s methodology. “Technology adoption is only as strong as its user acceptance. A structured approach to change management, communication and training ensures smooth transitions and minimises disruption,” she observes.

This practical experience gained from SailPoint’s Customer Zero programme has reinforced SailPoint’s conviction that traditional security approaches no longer suffice in today’s landscape. “With identity becoming the new perimeter, protecting user access is more critical than ever in a highly connected digital environment,” she states.

To address this constantly-shifting threat landscape, Sree advocates for Zero-Trust Architecture implementation. “Adopt a ‘never trust, always verify’ approach by ensuring continuous authentication and enforcing least-privilege access for all users, applications and devices,” she advises.

Authentication strategies must also evolve beyond password-based systems. “MFA is no longer optional; it must be a default security measure. Moving toward passwordless authentication with biometrics or hardware keys enhances both security and user experience,” she recommends.

For organisations seeking to strengthen their security posture, AI-driven identity threat detection offers significant advantages while privileged accounts – those with elevated access rights – require particularly robust protection.

Completing the security framework, lifecycle management automation ensures access rights remain appropriate throughout employment changes. “Automate identity lifecycle management to ensure employees, partners and contractors have the right access at the right time and that it’s revoked immediately when no longer needed.”

SailPoint sees AI future in cybersecurity development

As cyber threats grow in sophistication and volume, traditional security approaches are struggling to keep pace. Security operations centres face alert fatigue, with teams often overwhelmed by the sheer number of potential incidents requiring investigation. Meanwhile, attackers continue to deploy increasingly advanced techniques to bypass conventional defences. This environment has created fertile ground for AI to emerge as a transformative force in cybersecurity.

"I am most excited about AI's ability to revolutionise cybersecurity by making it more proactive, intelligent and autonomous," says Sree.

The potential for AI to transform threat detection represents one of the most promising applications. "Real-time analysis and predictive capabilities help identify and neutralise threats before they escalate," she explains. And for organisations implementing Zero Trust frameworks, AI offers substantial benefits through behavioural analysis. "AI enables continuous authentication and

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crew

> **“Identity is now the primary attack vector”**
>
> **SREEVENI KANCHARLA,**
> CIO,
> SAILPOINT

behavioral analytics, ensuring secure access without added friction,” she notes.

Resource constraints have historically limited security teams’ capabilities, but AI promises to alleviate these pressures. “AI reduces manual security tasks, accelerates incident response, and optimises IT workflows,” she observes, pointing to efficiency gains that allow human analysts to focus on higher-value activities.

These technologies have delivered tangible results for SailPoint beyond theoretical benefits. “Through digital transformation we were able to achieve major milestones for SailPoint: preparing SailPoint for IPO, accelerating revenue growth, improving customer experience, reducing financial closing time and scaling the organisation,” Sree shares.

Looking toward the horizon, Sree sees AI bridging the gap between security and business innovation – enabling organisations to be both secure and agile. “AI-driven cybersecurity not only strengthens defenses but also enhances user experiences,” she says, “reduces friction in authentication and supports digital transformation without compromising security.” ○

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KAIZEN GAMING'S
SECURITY STRAT
GLOBAL EX

WRITTEN BY:
MARCUS
LAW

PRODUCED BY:
CONNOR
DODDINGTON

TEGY ENABLING XPANSION

Kaizen Gaming is deploying AI, cloud computing and ISO-certified security frameworks to protect customers across regulated markets

The online gaming sector has undergone significant regulatory and technological changes in recent years, with operators facing increased requirements for data protection, responsible gaming measures and market -specific compliance.

Kaizen Gaming, which operates the Betano sports betting and gaming brand across multiple continents, has positioned itself in this changing landscape through a focus on technological development and security measures. The company's operations span 19 markets in Europe, the Americas and Africa.

Each new jurisdiction requires specific security protocols, data protection measures and responsible gaming tools – all of which must integrate with existing player platforms and payment systems.

"Since the utmost goal is the protection of the customers and their data, they need to have a safe environment where they can enjoy their gaming experience, and all measures around that are taken by the team in order to offer a secure and fun product," explains Aggelos Karonis, Head of Information Security at Kaizen Gaming.

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The Kaizen
Campus at night

> **"We'll never sacrifice security for the sake of entertainment or anything that has to do with speed"**
>
> **AGGELOS KARONIS,**
> HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY,
> KAIZEN GAMING

The company's growth trajectory has resulted in a workforce of 2,700 people managing operations across multiple time zones and regulatory frameworks. This expansion occurred during a period of significant change in the gaming technology sector, with the emergence of AI tools, increased sophisticated cyber threats and evolving regulatory requirements.

"We've been growing very fast in many new markets, seeing huge growth in both the use of technologies as well as our customer base, which has brought internal growth as well," notes Aggelos. This growth culminated in recognition at the 2024 EGR Operator Awards, where the company secured seven awards, including Operator of the Year – the greatest distinction available for online gaming operators.

The company's development of in-house technology solutions, rather than a reliance on third-party providers, demonstrates its approach to maintaining control over security and customer experience. As Aggelos highlights, this enables Kaizen Gaming to be "faster and more efficient" when it comes to business development.

Aligning technology initiatives with business goals

Kaizen Gaming's technology operations span multiple domains, with infrastructure requirements determined by specific market regulations and technical requirements for gaming operations. The company aligns technology initiatives with business goals while keeping daily operations running. The infrastructure division maintains systems supporting staff speaking more than 30 languages across 40 nationalities, requiring specific considerations for access controls and security protocols.

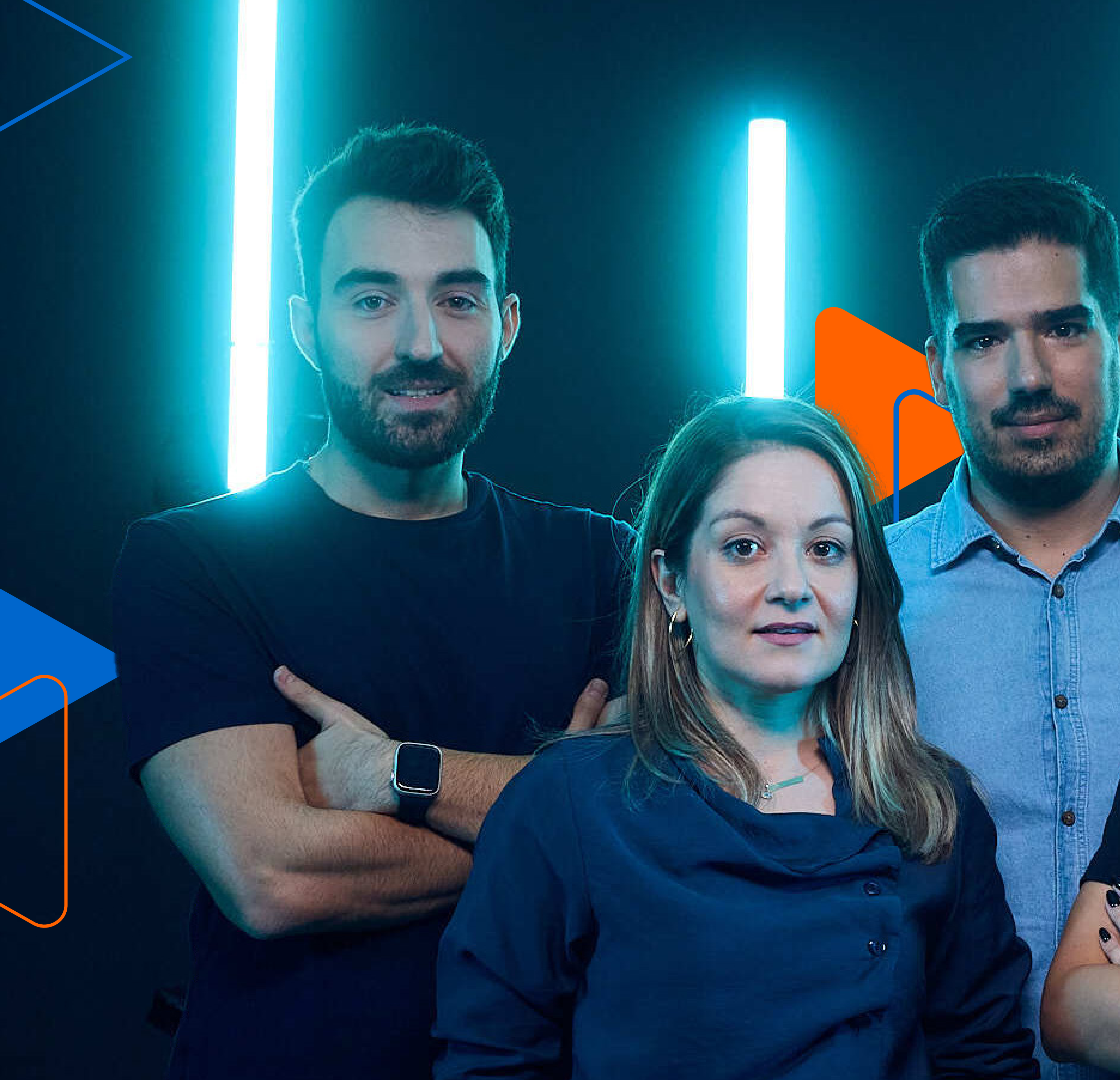
The security team operates as part of the infrastructure department, enabling direct integration of security measures into system development. "Information security is a very broad domain. It covers both cybersecurity and all other aspects of security. We're a technological organisation, so in that sense, cybersecurity is the focus," explains Aggelos.

The infrastructure must support rapid deployment capabilities for new market entry. "We're using a very common framework that is well accepted across the globe. We're using the ISO 27001. We're certified for it and this provides a strategy and provides initiatives that can cover all the aspects of the business that we operate in. It is also a big enabler when it comes to releasing new markets," he says.

AGGELOS KARONIS

TITLE: **HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY, INFORMATION SECURITY**

Aggelos Karonis is Head of Technology, Information Security at Kaizen Gaming. His goals are defined by in-depth layered security and robust architecture design, aligned with the company's business strategy. With certifications in CISM and CISA, as well as 10 years of experience in Cybersecurity and IT Audit, he is dedicated to safeguarding the digital infrastructure and nurturing a proactive security culture within the organization. His tenure has been marked by deploying innovative security solutions tailored to the online betting and gaming industry. Aggelos holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the Athens University of Economics and Business.



This market expansion has driven the continuous development of infrastructure capabilities, requiring specific approaches to infrastructure management. “These were the troubles that we’re trying to deal with – the bigger headaches, let’s say. So we had to find an adaptable framework that could offer a secure benchmark and on top of that build with regards to specialisation.”

Kaizen Gaming’s security framework

Kaizen Gaming’s security framework integrates governance, risk management, compliance protocols and engineering operations across its multiple territories. This framework operates as part of the infrastructure division, enabling direct implementation of security measures into system development and operational processes.

Kaizen Gaming's tech department includes over 700 people worldwide

"The GRC team takes care of the compliance standards, they take care of the audits, they make sure that the policy and procedures are in there to create a framework to protect the customers, our employees as well," explains Aggelos. "But they also enable the engineering team to have all these triggers and inputs in order to offer their expertise and cover the solutions that we use with a benchmark."

Physical security measures also form a specific component of the framework. "Physical security is very important when we're talking about a distributed space like ours with multiple offices around the world, which can be the entry point for many threats," Aggelos explains.

The implementation of security measures follows strict protocols across all operations. "We'll never

> **“AI being brought into this discussion works in two ways. It enables the attackers and it makes them smarter, but it also enables the defenders as well”**

AGGELOS KARONIS,
HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY,
KAIZEN GAMING

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Kaizen Gaming celebrated a world first of seven trophies in a single year at the EGR Operator Awards 2024

sacrifice security for the sake of entertainment or anything that has to do with speed," Aggelos states.

The framework also incorporates specific measures for employee security awareness. "Building that, maintaining it and expanding it to all these new geographies, it's a very tricky process and I'm very proud to say that our company and our employees are very security cautious," Aggelos explains.

A comprehensive cloud strategy

Kaizen Gaming takes an approach to cloud computing services of selective implementation based on operational requirements and security considerations. The company deploys cloud infrastructure – computing services delivered over the internet – only in cases where clear operational advantages exist.

"Cloud is a very appealing product... but it's not something that covers everything," explains Aggelos. "For Kaizen Gaming, it was a conscious decision to utilise cloud where it makes sense and remove hurdles, like how we rapidly expand or how we avoid maintenance or be faster in building things."

The company's cloud vendor selection process incorporates specific security assessments. "We're always working with reputable vendors with examining always what is the footprint of the vendor, what is their security strategy and if it aligns with ours," notes Aggelos. "This is part of the due diligence process, where we get in touch and understand if we can be aligned and what it means for our security posture."

The strategy enables cost efficiencies in specific use cases while maintaining control over critical systems. Each cloud implementation requires specific

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The Kaizen Campus, Kaizen Gaming's HQ in Athens, Greece

security protocols aligned with the company's broader security framework. "Everything that you bring to your ecosystem and cloud is an expansion of our ecosystem, and has to be examined and aligned with our goals."

The cloud strategy supports market expansion requirements through rapid deployment capabilities while maintaining security standards. This approach ensures consistent service delivery across different regulatory environments. "The same experience that we offer security-wise in a geography that has been technologically evolved or risk mitigated by a very strict regulator is the exact similar one that we want to offer to a less advanced geography," says Aggelos.

This measured approach to cloud adoption forms part of the company's broader technology strategy. "Everything that we designed, every solution and every decision we take is focused on tailor-made solutions for our customers."

Tackling security challenges

Online gaming operators face evolving security threats requiring continuous adaptation of protection measures. For Kaizen Gaming, these challenges include AI implementations, sophisticated cyber attacks and market-specific security requirements.

"AI being brought into this discussion works in two ways. It enables the attackers and it makes them smarter so they move faster and they can adapt to security mechanisms, but it also enables the defenders as well," explains Aggelos.

KEY FACTS:

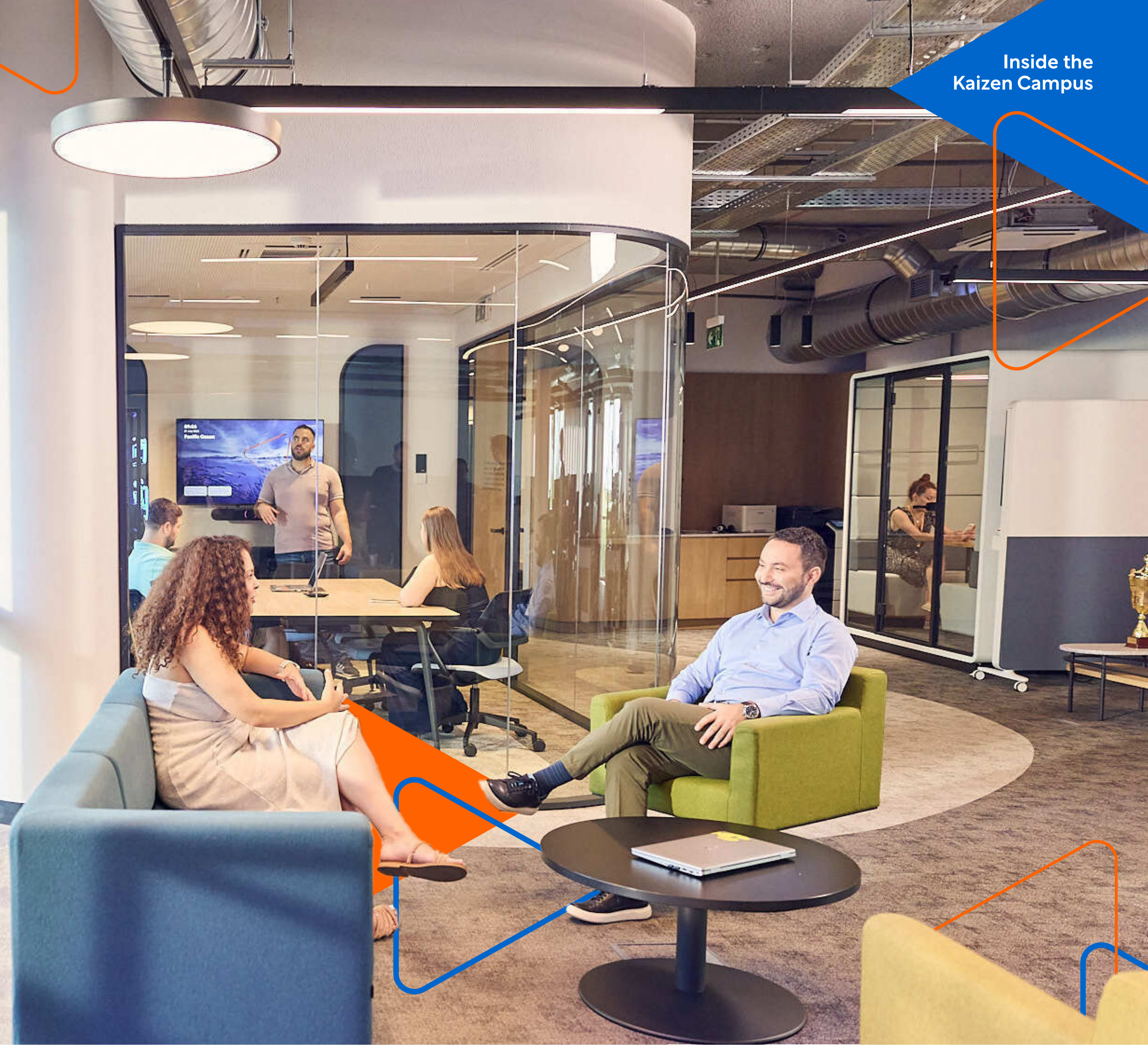
- Operations span 19 markets across Europe, Latin America, Africa and North America
- Workforce of 2,700 people speaking more than 30 languages across 40 nationalities
- ISO 27001 certified for information security management
- Secured seven awards at the 2024 EGR Operator Awards including Operator of the Year
- Maintains partnerships with UEFA and Aston Villa Football Club
- Latest market entries include Denmark, Belgium and Colombia

Kaizen
Gaming

"We make use of AI in order to protect ourselves, to evolve and to become more efficient when it comes to dealing with threats."

Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks – attempts to overwhelm systems with traffic – represent an increasing technical challenge. "We have seen huge changes in the records of DDoS attacks, huge volumes in the volumetric approach of mitigated attacks by big providers like Akamai or Cloudflare," notes Aggelos. "This demonstrates how much the attackers have evolved and how much this technology has been utilised by them."

Market-specific threats require tailored security responses while maintaining consistent standards across territories. "When it comes to actually covering a threat that is prevalent in a specific geography, we are able to tackle it more efficiently. But when it comes to having a homogenous approach across the organisation, we can also offer that," says Aggelos.


Inside the Kaizen Campus

Employee protection forms an integral part of the security strategy. “For information security, our employees are also an internal customer. We need to have them protected not just for the sake of protecting the company’s assets and revenue. Protecting the people is what security stands for,” notes Aggelos.

The security team maintains continuous monitoring of emerging threats while adapting to technological advancement. “One more characteristic that is changing and becoming a big headache is how fast the technology drives processing power,” Aggelos says.

“It’s an ever-changing world, and this is what keeps us excited. We’ll always be happy to learn, to read, to adapt to changes so that we continue offering a security benchmark that we consider is appropriate for the users.”

Strategic technology partnerships

Kaizen Gaming also maintains strategic partnerships with technology providers to support its operational

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Kaizen Gaming recently inaugurated a new office in São Paulo, Brazil

requirements across multiple territories. All partners are aligned with both the company's values and security requirements, as these relationships form a key part of the company's approach to maintaining technical capabilities during market expansion.

Atlassian and Slack are among the main enterprise applications the company has been using. Bryd, a global implementation partner for workplace messaging platform Slack, providing technical support for communication and workflow requirements, has helped Kaizen Gaming in its knowledge driving initiatives and integration of tools and automations that optimise their day-to-day.

Future development

The AI regulations will be a topic that will be important to every technology company in the next year. Kaizen Gaming is among them, with its development strategy incorporating emerging regulatory requirements, particularly European Union legislation concerning AI implementation in gaming operations. These requirements form part of the company's approach to market expansion and technical development.

AI is key to the company's development plans in many ways. One of them is incorporating it in new product features. Such features are the Casino Co-pilot, an AI assistant

> **“We want people that want to do great work and that are not just thinking of today, they’re thinking of tomorrow. This is continuous improvement.”**
>
> **AGGELOS KARONIS,**
> HEAD OF INFORMATION SECURITY,
> KAIZEN GAMING

Inside Kaizen Gaming’s new office in São Paulo

navigating players through the casino games and offering them personalized recommendations and insights, as well as AI cards, which automatically transform winning bets into personalised digital collectibles. The company has also begun developing its own slot games with AI-generated graphics. Another goal is for AI to enhance the company’s responsible gaming tools and practices.

Workplace technology implementations is an area of focus, too. Kaizen Gaming is certified as a Great Workplace in four countries (Greece, Brazil, Czechia, Colombia) and as one of Fortune’s 100 Best Companies to Work for™ in Europe for 2024. Incorporating new technology tools to improve internal processes and productivity has been key in this award winning culture, with the company being committed to continue building on that same path.

The security team maintains focus on emerging technologies while evolving security measures. “What we aim to do is focus on the new technologies, keeping an eye out for them. The AI trend is not just a trend, it’s a new way of working, a new way of living actually. So we are adapting to that as well,” says Aggelos.

The company’s recruitment strategy supports technical development through specific hiring practices.

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Betano

"We have a team of security professionals that are very hungry to learn new stuff and that's how we hire. We hire with character," Aggelos explains. "We need people that are always excited to look into new things and that are looking for the next challenge.

"We want people that want to do great work and that are not just thinking of today, they're thinking of tomorrow," Aggelos concludes. "This is continuous improvement. Focusing on today will not take you places. Focusing on tomorrow will always keep you relevant and make you become a leader in any industry." ○

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With Menthol
Fresh Lemon
Dishwashing Liquid
Original
Dishwashing Liquid
ULTRA SHARP
ROCKSTAR
Strawberry Milkshake
Oatmilk & Honey
Hand Wash
Pineapple Splash
MULTIPURPOSE SOAP

OTTLING COMPANY'S
SFORMATION

WRITTEN BY:
CHARLIE
KING

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS
VAUGHAN

SevenUp Bottling Company's CIO & Head of IT are implementing innovative digital strategies including apps, ERP & AI for Nigeria's exclusive Pepsi bottler

As the exclusive bottler for Pepsi in Nigeria, SevenUp Bottling Company puts products in the hands of millions of Nigerians every year. Nigeria represents one of the largest markets for Pepsi globally, with SevenUp Bottling often vying neck-and-neck with Coca-Cola for market dominance. The company bottles a wide range of non-alcoholic beverages including Pepsi, 7UP, Mirinda, Mountain Dew and Teem.

Over the past few years, SevenUp Bottling has embarked on a comprehensive modernisation journey, navigating unique market challenges and leveraging technology to develop its offering.

Established in 1960, SevenUp Bottling Company has grown to encompass nine factories, one head office and several co-packing operations, employing approximately 5,000 people.

By 2018 however, the company found that its IT infrastructure had fallen behind global industry standards and was hindering operational efficiency and market responsiveness.

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Carbonated Lemon and Lime
Flavoured Soft Drink

VASCO GONÇALVES

TITLE: **CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER**

With more than two decades of experience in IT leadership, software engineering, and digital transformation, Vasco Gonçalves has been instrumental in modernising SevenUp Bottling Company's technology landscape. As CIO since 2018, he has led SAP migration, hybrid cloud adoption, and IT service expansion, ensuring seamless operations across the company's factories and distribution centres.

Originally from Portugal, Vasco transitioned from engineering to IT and previously specialised in SharePoint, CRM, and enterprise applications. His strategic leadership has driven cloud innovation, AI adoption, and IoT solutions, reinforcing SevenUp's market dominance as Nigeria's exclusive Pepsi bottler.

The journey to modernisation and digitisation

Under the leadership of Vasco Gonçalves, who was appointed the company's Chief Information Officer in 2018, and Ibidapo Ibrahim, Head of IT, SevenUp Bottling embarked on an ambitious digital transformation. The overhaul aimed not only to modernise the company's technological capabilities but also to redefine its processes, culture and business model. From upgrading basic IT services to implementing

Born
in 1960
just like
Naija

advanced ERP systems and exploring innovative sales channels, the company's journey illuminates the multifaceted nature of digital transformation in a complex market environment.

Vasco explains: "As the innovation lead at the time, I modernised our aging network infrastructure, replacing standalone switches and access points with centralised network management. Now, our WiFi SSID is unified nationwide, allowing seamless, password-free connectivity across all sites."

The company's IT infrastructure was severely outdated, with the last major technology update occurring around 2001. This lag extended beyond hardware to processes and systems.

"Even in the instances where the ERP version was upgraded, the process was not upgraded," Vasco continues. "We still kept all processes centralised in our core accounting, not going to other functions. It was mainly a posting system."

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This limited technological footprint hampered the company's ability to operate efficiently and compete effectively.

Starting from scratch

The first step in SevenUp Bottling's digital transformation was to expand its IT service catalogue and upgrade its infrastructure. This included democratising internet access, implementing security services and firewalls and overhauling the company's hardware and networking capabilities.

"We had to change everything," Vasco emphasises. "We started by expanding our service catalogue, offering more services and changing the hardware, democratising the internet, bringing firewalls, bringing security services along with them. We had to do everything from scratch."

This comprehensive overhaul was necessary due to the outdated state of the existing infrastructure, and the process involved not just updating technology, but also rethinking the entire IT service model for the company.

Bolstering infrastructure

"Today we've grown to having close to 50 services that we provide to the organisation," says Ibidapo. "Part of our journey was moving to a third party data centre within Nigeria, which is part of our new hybrid cloud strategy where we leverage on different cloud providers including our private cloud on-premise to improve the services we provide."

The upgrade has also improved internal communications at SevenUp Bottling.

"As we continue to grow as a country and more services become available from our partners, we are leveraging some of those services and improving overall connectivity and the availability of collaborative solutions."

SevenUp Bottling has entered a contract with Google to become one of very few organisations in Nigeria that is leveraging Google's technology. Thanks to the attention to infrastructure developments and some well placed partnerships, SevenUp Bottling has achieved full national connectivity across its sites.

"We no longer have to worry about connectivity across our business locations," Ibidapo explains. "Regardless of where you are in Nigeria, you can easily function in any of our business locations like you are sitting in our head office."

ERP transformation

A critical component of SevenUp Bottling's modernisation efforts was the upgrade of its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system. Initially, the company explored simpler solutions, but ultimately decided to implement SAP, a comprehensive business software suite.

"As of now, we have half of our factories in SAP and the other half will soon be there," Vasco says. "This has led to a massive process of re-engineering. We took a strategy of using what SAP offers as standard where we can, and changing our processes to match SAP processes whilst still leaving room to accommodate changes because we have uniquenesses in our market, country and industry that cannot fully adopt the standards of SAP."

This shift to SAP represents a significant leap forward for SevenUp Bottling, moving from a system that was primarily used for record-keeping to one that can support real-time operational decision-making.

SevenUp Bottling's partnership with Descasio

SevenUp Bottling Company's digital transformation journey has been significantly bolstered by its strategic partnership with Descasio, a technology solutions provider.

IBIDAPO IBRAHIM

TITLE: **HEAD OF IT BUSINESS SOLUTIONS**

Ibidapo Ibrahim, Head of IT Business Solutions at SevenUp Bottling Company, has more than a decade of expertise in IT infrastructure, business solutions, and digital transformation. He has played a pivotal role in modernising the company's technology landscape, leading cloud strategy, cybersecurity and IT operations. His core strength lies in designing and implementing in-house solutions that drive efficiency and scalability. Since joining in 2019, he has rebuilt the company's networking infrastructure, ensuring high availability and resilience. His leadership has helped SevenUp Bottling Company stay at the forefront of digital innovation in Nigeria's competitive beverage industry.

> **"We need to develop very innovative, cost effective solutions that allow us to explore IoT during the microeconomic difficulties that are currently facing Nigeria"**

IBIDAPO IBRAHIM,
HEAD OF IT BUSINESS SOLUTIONS,
SEVENUP BOTTLING COMPANY

9
FACTORIES
5,000
EMPLOYEES
1
HEAD OFFICE

“I didn’t want to depend on vendors,” Vasco shares. “I wanted to depend on partners.”

Descasio has proven to be a reliable ally for SevenUp Bottling, offering support that extends beyond typical vendor services.

“With Decasio, I know I can pick up the phone and ask for help,” Vasco says. This level of trust and responsiveness has been crucial in navigating the complex challenges of digital transformation.

The partnership began with Descasio implementing software solutions such as Google and Microsoft licensing for SevenUp Bottling and, over time, it has evolved to include Descasio’s own in-house solutions.

“Descasio didn’t just sell us solutions; they partnered with us strategically, leveraging our combined technical expertise to explore various options and identify the best approach for our business,” Ibidapo explains.

“We are currently working closely with them for process digitisation and automation, using their home grown solution called plug.”

The partnership with Descasio has also helped SevenUp Bottling navigate the challenges posed by Nigeria's economic conditions, particularly currency devaluation.

Ibidapo explains: "The devaluation of the currency has allowed us to innovate."

Operational innovations enhancing customer experience

Alongside the ERP transformation, SevenUp Bottling has introduced a range of supporting solutions to enhance operational efficiency.

"This customer-facing application is called Beta Padi – a Nigerian term that means a very good friend," Ibidapo explains. "When someone refers to you as their "Beta Padi," they are expressing trust, loyalty and deep friendship."

The mobile application enables activities such as production declarations and gate management to be performed on-site. As well as being used internally, the application supports customer experience too.

"We created our own mobile application for our customers where they can see their own account, raise their invoices, make their payments, see what's going on with their account and help us reduce the overhead of having to maintain their accounts," Vasco explains.

These mobile solutions represent a significant shift from the previous manual processes, allowing for real-time data entry in the factories and improved accuracy in production reporting and inventory management. This customer-facing application not only improves the

customer experience but also reduces the operational burden on SevenUp Bottling. While the customer – and head office – benefits from live updates from within the factory, SevenUp Bottling also receives live data from its customers.

"Instead of having to rely on our own controls, we leverage on putting the information at the ends of our customers for them to be able to do that account reconciliation and keep their accounts in view," Vasco says. "We sometimes even hear from them before our own team detects the problems."

"We also have an app called Plant Automation, which streamlines plant control," Ibidapo expands.

"Using a QR code on the PET pallet, we track products across our systems to the warehouse, providing the security team with the data needed to monitor outgoing goods."

Exploring IoT technology for operational efficiency

SevenUp Bottling Company is actively exploring the potential of Internet of Things (IoT) technology to enhance its operational efficiency.

"We are exploring IoT for truck tracking and diesel monitoring, which will remain work in progress for now. Currently, we use IoT to track the temperature of critical IT equipment locations across Nigeria," Ibidapo says.

"We've integrated AI into our workflow, leveraging Google Gemini AI within our Google Workspace plan. The Gemini Notetaker in Google Meet enhances requirement gathering and stakeholder alignment, while Google Microphone Sync revolutionises in-room meetings, allowing seamless participation from individual laptops.

"Gemini in Sheets helps us analyse data quickly, and NotebookLM accelerates data consumption by enabling instant queries – especially useful for reviewing terms and conditions of online products."

One primary focus is asset tracking, particularly for the company's truck fleet. IoT sensors could provide real-time location data and performance metrics, potentially improving logistics and fleet management.

"We've looked into IoT, and now we can use IoT to improve our asset tracking in most of our locations, particularly our trucks," Ibidapo explains. "We're also looking at how we can implement IoT to track how we consume diesel, for example, which is one of our main uses of energy."

SevenUp Bottling is also exploring using IoT to count items on its production line, which would increase data-driven sales and boost accuracy.

However, Ibidapo notes that implementing these technologies presents unique challenges in Nigeria: "One major

factor about this is we can use most of the standard solutions out of the box," he explains. "We need to develop very innovative, cost effective solutions that allow us to explore IoT during the microeconomic difficulties that are currently facing Nigeria."

Using technology to boost sales

In a bid to gain greater visibility into market demand and behaviour, SevenUp Bottling has begun piloting online sales channels. This initiative aims to provide insights into the relationship between distributors and retailers.

"We started running several initiatives that allow us to get that line of sight into what the market is demanding and how the market is behaving in real time – not by sending a sales team on the ground to assess how the shops look like, what's the stock count in the shops, but by controlling the transactions in real time," Vasco says.

One innovative approach involves using WhatsApp as an ordering and payment platform.

Vasco says: "As it's fully integrated into a payment system, people who order on WhatsApp can pay online and we get line of sight into how our retail market is behaving."

This digital sales channel not only provides valuable market insights but also opens up new avenues for growth and customer engagement.

Cultural and portfolio innovation

SevenUp Bottling's transformation extends beyond technology to encompass cultural change and product innovation. It has also expanded its product portfolio beyond Pepsi-branded beverages to include its own brands and been responsive to market needs.

Vasco notes: "We stop being just Pepsi bottlers to create our own products. We bottle our own drinks, our own brands and they're pretty successful."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the company demonstrated its agility by quickly entering the hand sanitiser market.

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"When there was a need for hand sanitisers that were not available in Nigeria during Covid, we quickly launched the only hand sanitiser made in Nigeria. We used an old bottled water preform, put a sprayer and we made it available," says Vasco.

"We democratised it and we made the hand sanitiser available pretty much anywhere in Nigeria."

Unique market challenges

SevenUp Bottling operates in a market with unique challenges, and for much of its history, the company has faced a situation where demand exceeded production capacity.

"The majority of the time I spent with our business was always handicapped in capacity," Vasco says. "The demand exceeded the capacity, which was a constant for the industry in Nigeria up until very recently."

This situation of excess demand created a set of challenges that are uncommon in many other markets.

ORA

“Nothing gets you ready for not having enough capacity for what you can sell”

VASCO GONÇALVES,
CHIEF INFORTMATION OFFICER,
SEVENUP BOTTLING COMPANY

“Nothing gets you ready for not having enough capacity for what you can sell,” Vasco continues. “It’s a good problem that everybody would love to have, but it’s quite a unique problem.”

However, the market dynamics are shifting.

“We’re now reaching a stage where the players have more capacity than the market demands, which causes some pretty unique challenges that you don’t face in other parts of the world,” he says.

The future of SevenUp Bottling’s technological advancements

As SevenUp Bottling Company continues its digital transformation journey, the focus is shifting towards leveraging its newfound technological capabilities to drive further innovation and market responsiveness.

The company’s recent experiences, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, have demonstrated its ability to rapidly adapt to changing market conditions and consumer needs.

“We took that appetite for innovation during the pandemic and that segment became a line of home products. So right now we have bar soap, hand wash, general soap, multipurpose use soap,” Vasco says.

The product innovation has promoted and supported the company’s technological advancements.

“In the last few years, the company has gone through a massive transformation in all aspects and of course it demanded also for the procedures and the IT solutions to cope up with the business.”

Looking ahead, SevenUp Bottling Company will continue exploring new digital channels and leveraging data insights to drive decision-making. The company’s experience with capacity constraints and the recent shift to a market with more supply than demand presents unique challenges. As SevenUp Bottling continues to refine its digital capabilities, it is well-positioned to navigate these new challenges and maintain its competitive edge in Nigeria’s evolving beverage market.

A1’S DATA CENTR

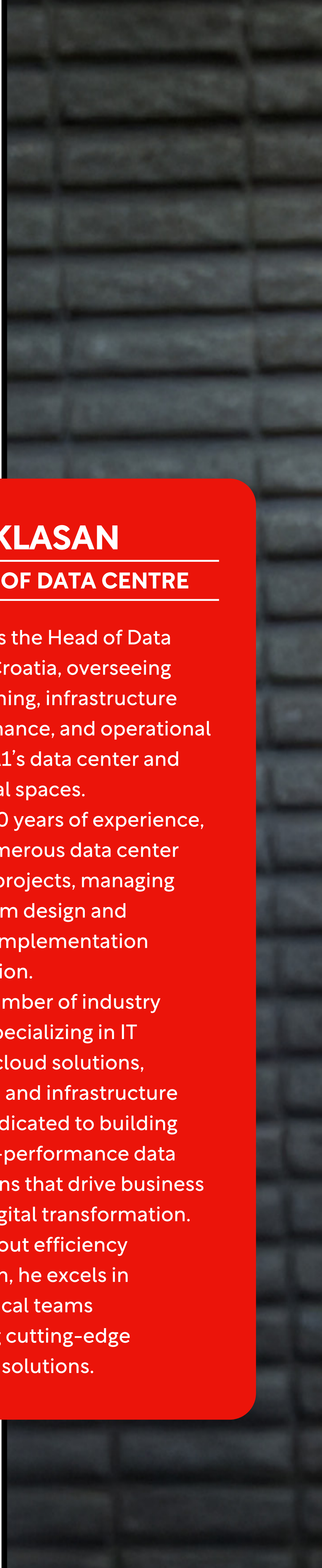
POWERING DIGI TRANSFORMATIO

RES:
TAL
ON

WRITTEN BY:
CHARLIE KING

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS VAUGHAN

Bojan Klasan, Head of Data Center at A1 Croatia explores how A1 is revolutionising the country's digital landscape with its state-of-the-art data centres



A1, part of the A1 Telekom Austria Group, serves approximately two million customers and employs 2,000 people in Croatia. The company is driving technological advancements by investing in 5G and operating the country's largest fibre-optic network, delivering ultra-fast internet and digital solutions for individuals and businesses.

"Beyond connectivity, we offer integrated mobile, fixed and TV services, advanced cloud, and ICT as a service solution," explains Bojan Klasan, Head of Data Center at A1.

BOJAN KLASAN

TITLE: HEAD OF DATA CENTRE

Bojan Klasan is the Head of Data Center at A1 Croatia, overseeing strategic planning, infrastructure design, governance, and operational efficiency of A1's data center and other technical spaces.

With over 20 years of experience, he has led numerous data center construction projects, managing everything from design and budgeting to implementation and optimization.

He holds number of industry certificates, specializing in IT architecture, cloud solutions, cybersecurity, and infrastructure scalability. Dedicated to building resilient, high-performance data center solutions that drive business growth and digital transformation. Passionate about efficiency and innovation, he excels in leading technical teams and delivering cutting-edge infrastructure solutions.

A1's Croatian data centre infrastructure

"We operate Croatia's most state-of-the-art data centre, which recently underwent complex recertification and received a Tier III Facility certificate," Bojan says.

This certification makes A1's data centre one of only two in Croatia, and the only one in the Zagreb area, with this level of protection. The certification guarantees users the highest level of security, with impeccable 24/7 maintenance and support, and comprehensive ICT solutions that allow business users to focus on

Bojan Klasan,
Head of Data Centre,
A1 Croatia

A1
25 Making history since 1999

their core business without worrying about infrastructure.

A1’s data centre infrastructure is geographically distributed, ensuring high availability, security and scalability for both internal operations and B2B customers. The company’s data centres are strategically positioned across the country, supporting cloud computing, enterprise solutions, and mission-critical services with redundancy and compliance at the core of their design.

At the heart of A1’s infrastructure is DC Nežićeva (DCN) in Zagreb, the newest and most advanced data centre, built in 2021.

“DCN serves both B2B customers and internal operations as a secondary redundant site,” says Bojan. “It spans three floors with six server rooms and holds a Tier 3 Constructed Facility

certificate, along with PCI DSS, ISO 9001 and ISO 27001 certifications."

A1 also operates three more data centres in Zagreb, designed to support mainly internal infrastructure. One of the primary facilities, built in 2012, houses three server rooms and now operates at 90% capacity. Another long-standing site, in operation since 1999, has historically served as a key technical hub, though most of its server rooms will be decommissioned by the end of 2025 as part of a broader infrastructure consolidation.

Beyond Zagreb, A1 maintains a network of regional data centres that provide redundancy and support for critical infrastructure. Data centres in Rijeka, Split and Osijek were originally established as regional telecommunication hubs in the early 2000s and continue to serve as essential sites for internal operations and geo-redundant backups.

"All A1's data centres are built to ensure high availability and reliability, featuring redundant and robust

> **"Our mission goes beyond simply providing telecommunications services – we strive to empower individuals, businesses and communities"**
>
> **BOJAN KLASAN,**
> HEAD OF DATA CENTRE,
> A1 CROATIA

At the heart of A1's infrastructure is DC Nežićeva (DCN), the newest and most advanced data centre, built in

2021

infrastructure, geographic redundancy, with regular maintenance and upgrades," he says.

The company's commitment to sustainability is evident in its data centre operations. A1 integrates environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) principles into its strategic approach, focusing on reducing energy consumption, minimising environmental impact and aligning with global sustainability goals.

"Our data centres are designed with energy-efficient infrastructure and cooling technologies to reduce their environmental impact," Bojan explains. "We ensure that our facilities rely exclusively on renewable energy sources, including solar power and nuclear energy, which significantly reduce carbon emissions."

A1's energy consumption practices are particularly noteworthy. Despite a significant increase in ICT load and the growing number of colocation customers over the past three years, the company's energy consumption has remained stable.

This is achieved through infrastructure consolidation, the use of low-power hardware and virtualisation.

Comprehensive cloud and hosting services

A1 offers a comprehensive suite of cloud and hosting services designed to meet the diverse needs of businesses. These include data centre colocation, Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS), private and hybrid cloud solutions, Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS), Backup as a Service

(BaaS), Microsoft 365 integration and a Security Operations Center (SOC).

"These services, combined with our robust infrastructure, Tier 3 certifications, and adherence to industry standards, ensure that A1 delivers reliable, secure and scalable cloud and hosting solutions for businesses of all sizes," Bojan says.

Edge computing will soon play a crucial role in A1's infrastructure strategy, with the company testing it for several use cases. By deploying regional data centres closer to users, A1 aims to significantly reduce latency and enhance real-time processing capabilities for next-generation technologies, including 5G, IoT, AI and smart city solutions.

Commitment to sustainability and green technologies

A1 drives continuous investment in green energy solutions, energy-efficient infrastructure and eco-friendly initiatives aimed at reducing the company's overall environmental footprint. As part of the A1 Group, the company fully recognises its ecological and social responsibilities, working proactively toward promoting

a more resource-efficient and sustainable business model.

Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG) principles are integrated into its strategic approach, focusing on reducing energy consumption and minimising environmental impact. This commitment extends to all aspects of the company's operations, including its data centres.

In line with the EU's ambitious targets of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 and achieving a climate-neutral economy by 2050, A1 is committed to advancing sustainable practices across all aspects of its business. The company's data centres, which play a crucial role in its operations, are designed with energy-efficient infrastructure and cooling technologies to reduce their environmental impact.

Renewable energy usage in data centres

A1 ensures that its facilities rely exclusively on renewable energy sources, including solar power and nuclear energy, which significantly reduce carbon emissions.

"Our key data centres are powered by a combination of solar energy harvested from several solar stations and other renewable sources, ensuring a high level of energy efficiency while maintaining consistent operational reliability," Bojan says.

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> “We operate Croatia’s most state-of-the-art data centre, which recently underwent complex recertification and received a Tier III Facility certificate”
>
> **BOJAN KLASAN,**
> HEAD OF DATA CENTRE,
> A1 CROATIA

The company continuously monitors and optimises its energy consumption, with the goal of achieving even greater efficiency across all its sites. These efforts allow A1 to maintain world-class performance and uptime for its customers while contributing to both regional and global sustainability objectives.

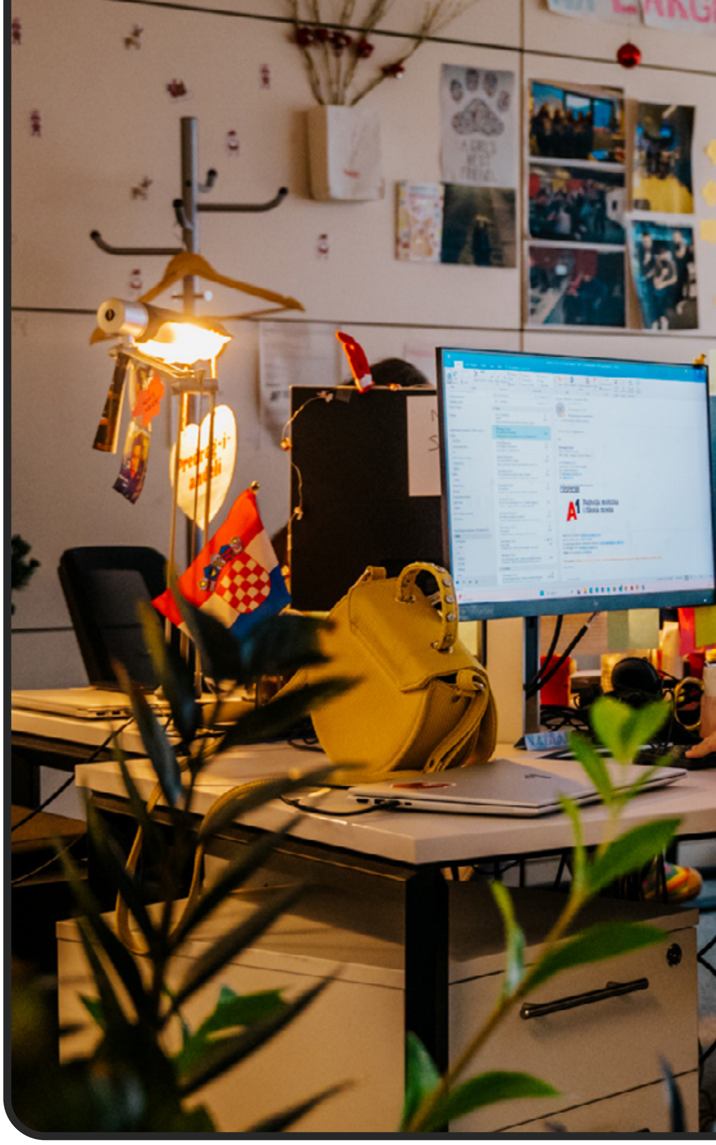
Energy consumption practices and efficiency measures

Despite a significant increase in ICT load and the growing number of colocation customers over the past three years, the company’s energy consumption has remained stable.

This remarkable achievement is the result of several strategic initiatives. A1 has focused on consolidating its infrastructure and implementing advanced technologies that enhance power usage efficiency and reduce cooling requirements. The company’s data centres use energy-efficient cooling systems such as free-air cooling, minimising energy demands for temperature control.

Through infrastructure consolidation, the use of low-power hardware, and virtualisation, A1 has been able to optimise its ICT footprint while keeping energy consumption steady, in line with regional and global sustainability goals. This approach not only reduces operational costs but also significantly minimises the company’s environmental impact.

Given Croatia’s climate, the company makes the most of free cooling methods,



utilising natural air conditions to minimise the need for energy-intensive air conditioning.

"Coupled with our use of renewable energy sources like solar and nuclear power, this approach not only reduces our energy consumption but also supports our commitment to sustainability," Bojan says.

"With cooler months throughout the year, we can further leverage these cooling solutions to improve efficiency while keeping our environmental impact low."

Security and data protection standards

Security and data protection are paramount in A1's data centre operations. The company implements robust physical and cybersecurity measures to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of its infrastructure and customer data.

Physical security measures include multi-layered access controls, biometric authentication systems, round-the-clock surveillance and secure perimeters that prevent unauthorised access. These measures are designed to protect against physical threats and ensure that only authorised personnel can access sensitive areas of the data centres.

On the cybersecurity front, A1 deploys state-of-the-art defences to safeguard its infrastructure. These include next-generation firewalls, AI-driven threat detection systems and robust DDoS protection mechanisms. These advanced security measures work in concert to detect, prevent, and mitigate potential cyber threats in real-time.

Adhering to internationally recognised security standards is a cornerstone of A1's operations. The company complies with ISO 27001 for information security management, ensuring that comprehensive security controls are in place to protect information assets.

A1 also fully meets GDPR requirements, demonstrating its commitment to protecting the privacy and personal data of its customers. As a trusted provider for banking infrastructures, the company maintains PCI-DSS certification, showcasing its dedication to safeguarding sensitive financial data.

A1's data centres are Tier 3 certified and meet ANSI/TIA-942 standards, ensuring high availability and reliability. Additionally, the company's cloud

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A1

services align with ISO 22301 standards for business continuity, guaranteeing consistent and uninterrupted service availability.

Comprehensive cloud and hosting services

A1 offers a wide range of cloud and hosting services designed to meet the diverse needs of businesses across various sectors. These services leverage the company's robust infrastructure and industry-leading certifications to provide reliable, secure, and scalable solutions.

Offerings include data centre colocation, allowing businesses to host their own infrastructure in A1's secure

> **"Our data centres are designed with energy-efficient infrastructure and cooling technologies to reduce their environmental impact"**
>
> **BOJAN KLASAN,**
> HEAD OF DATA CENTRE,
> A1 CROATIA

A1 operates
four
data centres
in Zagreb

and reliable facilities. For those looking for more flexible solutions, A1 provides Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS), offering scalable virtual servers and storage solutions that enable businesses to grow their infrastructure as needed.

Platform-as-a-Service (PaaS) solutions are also available, providing cloud environments optimised for application development. This enables businesses to build, test and deploy applications efficiently without the need to manage the underlying infrastructure.

For enterprises requiring more control and customisation, A1 offers private and hybrid cloud solutions. These secure, high-performance environments are tailored to enterprise needs, offering the benefits of both private and public clouds while maintaining control and flexibility.

Disaster recovery and business continuity solutions

Recognising the critical importance of business continuity, A1 provides Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS). This solution offers advanced real-time replication and failover capabilities, ensuring that businesses can quickly recover and continue operations in the event of an outage or disaster.

Complementing this, the company also offers Backup as a Service (BaaS), providing secure and reliable data backup solutions to safeguard critical business data. This service ensures that businesses can quickly recover their data in case of accidental deletion, hardware failure, or cyber attacks.

Integrated productivity and security solutions

To enhance collaboration and productivity, A1 offers seamless integration with Microsoft 365, enabling businesses to leverage cloud-based applications and services. This integration

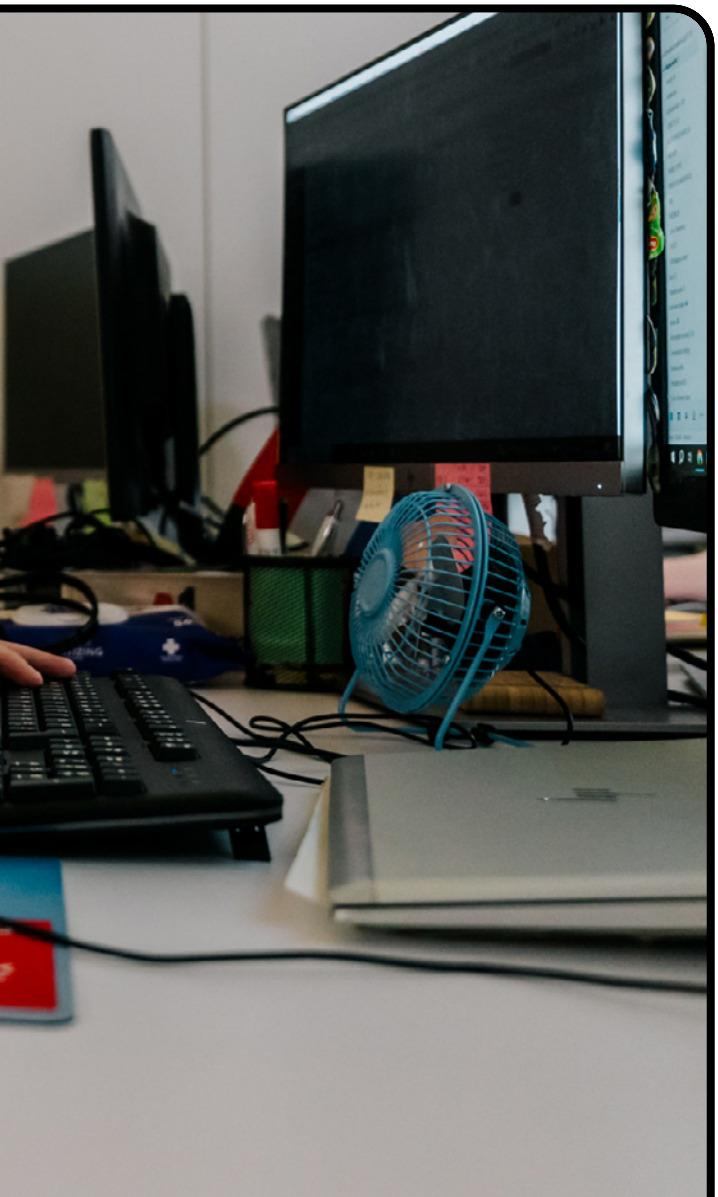
“These services, combined with our robust infrastructure, Tier 3 certification and adherence to industry standards, ensure that A1 delivers reliable, secure, and scalable cloud and hosting solutions for businesses of all sizes

BOJAN KLASAN,
HEAD OF DATA CENTRE,
A1 CROATIA

allows companies to work more efficiently and collaboratively, regardless of their physical location.

Security remains a top priority, and A1's Security Operations Center (SOC) provides proactive monitoring and protection against security threats. This service ensures the integrity of customers' infrastructure and data, offering peace of mind in an increasingly complex threat landscape.

"These services, combined with our robust infrastructure, Tier 3 certification and adherence to industry standards, ensure that A1 delivers reliable, secure and scalable cloud and hosting solutions for businesses of all sizes," Bojan explains.



Processing closer to the edge

Looking ahead, edge computing is set to play a crucial role in A1's infrastructure strategy. The company is currently in the process of testing edge computing for several use cases and preparing for wider implementation.

By deploying regional data centres closer to users, A1 aims to significantly reduce latency and enhance real-time processing capabilities. This approach will be particularly beneficial for next-generation technologies, including 5G networks, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, AI applications and smart city solutions.

"Edge computing will allow us to process data closer to where it's generated, reducing the need for long-distance communications between clients and servers," Bojan explains. "This will not only improve response times but also reduce bandwidth usage and enhance security and privacy."

As A1 continues to innovate and expand its data centre capabilities, the company remains committed to driving digital transformation while prioritising sustainability, security, and customer satisfaction.

Bojan concludes: "Our mission goes beyond simply providing telecommunications services – we strive to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to embrace digital transformation seamlessly." ○

US INDO-PACIFIC C
INVESTS IN
TRANSFOR

COMMAND TECH MATION

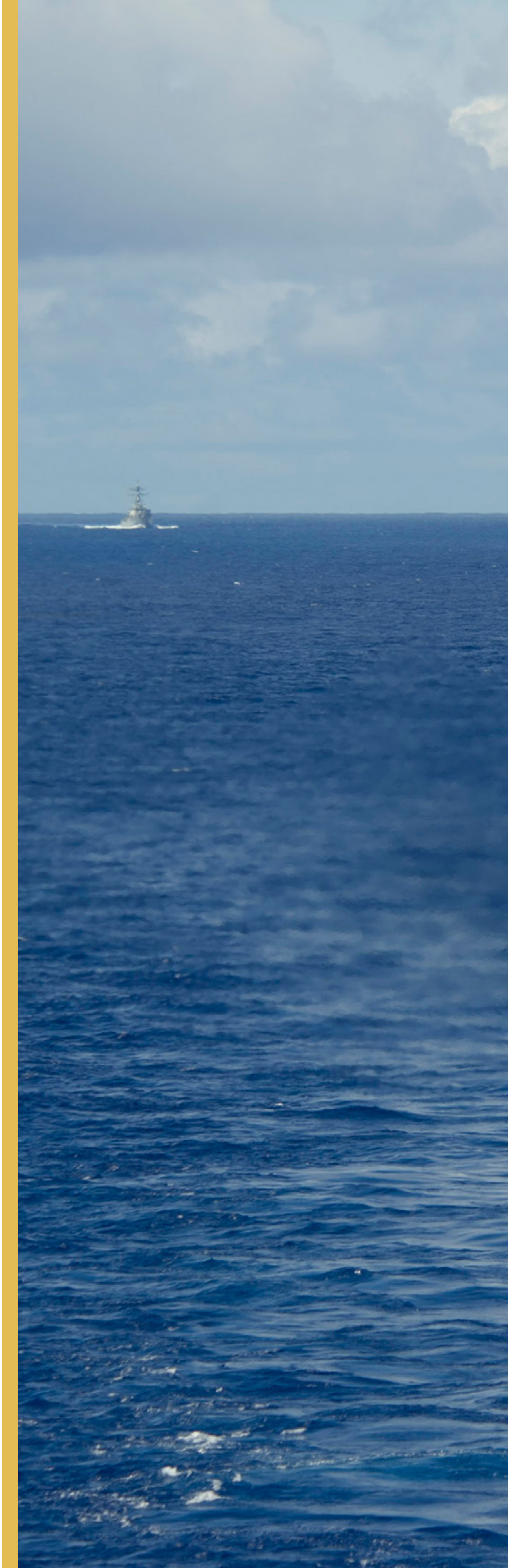
WRITTEN BY:
MARCUS
LAW

PRODUCED BY:
LEWIS
VAUGHAN

Pentagon strategy prioritises cybersecurity and AI systems to counter regional threats across a vast theatre spanning half the Earth's surface

The vast expanse of the Indo-Pacific region, described as the "epicenter of 21st-century geopolitics", serves as the operational backdrop for the United States Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). Designated by the Department of Defense (DoD) as the "priority theater", INDOPACOM oversees an area staggering in scale – encompassing roughly half the Earth's surface, 38 nations, over half the world's population and immense cultural and economic diversity. Within this vibrant yet volatile landscape, INDOPACOM's core mission is clear: deter aggression, maintain regional stability, strengthen alliances, respond to crises and, if deterrence fails, be prepared to fight and win – a mission which hinges on partnership, presence and military readiness.

However, executing this mission faces extensive challenges. The region is marked by significant geopolitical competition, most notably the rise of the People's Republic of China, identified by the DoD as the "most comprehensive and serious challenge" to US national security. Beyond China, threats from North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes, transnational issues like terrorism and piracy and the



F/A-18E Super Hornet's can generate terabytes of performance data that helps identify maintenance requirements long-term security risks posed by climate change further complicate the security environment.

As a result, INDOPACOM is undertaking an expansive technological modernisation programme deemed essential to maintain strategic advantages in a region characterised by intensifying geopolitical competition. The command's initiatives focus on cybersecurity architecture, AI capabilities, human-machine teaming and integrated command systems that collectively represent a fundamental shift in military operational concepts.

Zero Trust architecture forms foundation for INDOPACOM cyber defence systems

The Indo-Pacific region has become the primary theatre for persistent cyber conflict, with state actors regularly conducting espionage operations, targeting critical infrastructure and attempting to disrupt defence networks. This shifting digital battleground has prompted INDOPACOM to rebuild its cybersecurity approach around Zero Trust architecture, moving beyond traditional perimeter defences that have proved inadequate in today's distributed operational environment.

The US Department of Defense first released its Zero Trust Strategy and Roadmap in 2022, establishing a target for components to implement 91 specific activities by the end of Fiscal Year 2027. This framework operates on core principles of assuming networks are already compromised and requiring continuous verification of users and devices regardless of their location within the network.

Traditional security models, relying heavily on perimeter defences,

38

Number of nations within INDOPACOM's area of responsibility, containing over half the world's population

New technologies analyse vast amounts of network traffic in real time

are increasingly insufficient in today's distributed, interconnected operational environment where adversaries may already be inside the network. Zero Trust represents a significant cultural shift, moving personnel away from ingrained habits of implicit trust towards a mindset of continuous verification and adherence to stricter security protocols.

The command is pioneering Zero Trust approaches through initiatives such as its International Mission Network (IMN), designed for secure data sharing with coalition partners. However, implementation faces challenges in establishing federated identity management solutions and standardising data classification across the enterprise.

The Department of the Navy, with significant forces under INDOPACOM, has aligned its own cyber strategy with this approach, leveraging cloud environments like Flank Speed to accelerate Zero Trust deployment. This proactive posture reflects the recognition of cyberspace as a contested warfighting domain and the need to deter and counter adversary actions effectively.

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SMX executive explains how with design, integration and zero trust, they're able to keep mission critical information sharing in defence networks secure

Securing increasingly complex networks has become a Herculean task. Yet one company, SMX, has established itself as a trusted partner of government and military clients through its innovative solutions for complex multi-national defence networks.

As a technology integrator and service provider, SMX specialises in designing, implementing and managing secure information sharing environments for government and military clients. With a focus on Mission Partner Environments (MPEs) and zero trust architectures, SMX is revolutionising how nations collaborate in the digital space.

Revolutioniing partner environments

At the heart of SMX's innovations is its work on the Indo-Pacific Mission Network (IMN).

"Through IMN, we are actively designing, testing, fielding and validating a zero trust, data-centric security enabled Mission Partner Environment," explains Dana Dewey, Mission Solutions Group President at SMX.

The complexity of these environments is staggering: "Mission Partner Environments are some of the most complex environments in terms of both technology and data governance." However, SMX's unique position as an integrator allows it to navigate these complexities effectively.

Zero trust architecture as an integrator

"IMN is crucial to protecting the US and the information from our partner networks," says Dewey.

SMX's approach therefore includes the traditional Risk Management Framework (RMF) and rapidly developing standards associated with zero trust and data-centric security.

Securing a future for multi-cloud strategies

Looking to the future, SMX is heavily invested in multi-cloud strategies. This focus on cloud integration aligns with the broader industry trend towards flexible, scalable solutions.

SMX will therefore work to implement agile methodologies to rapidly evolve with increasing demands and complexities.

All these applications mean that SMX is not just keeping pace with the cybersecurity needs of complex Mission Partner Environments – it's setting the pace.

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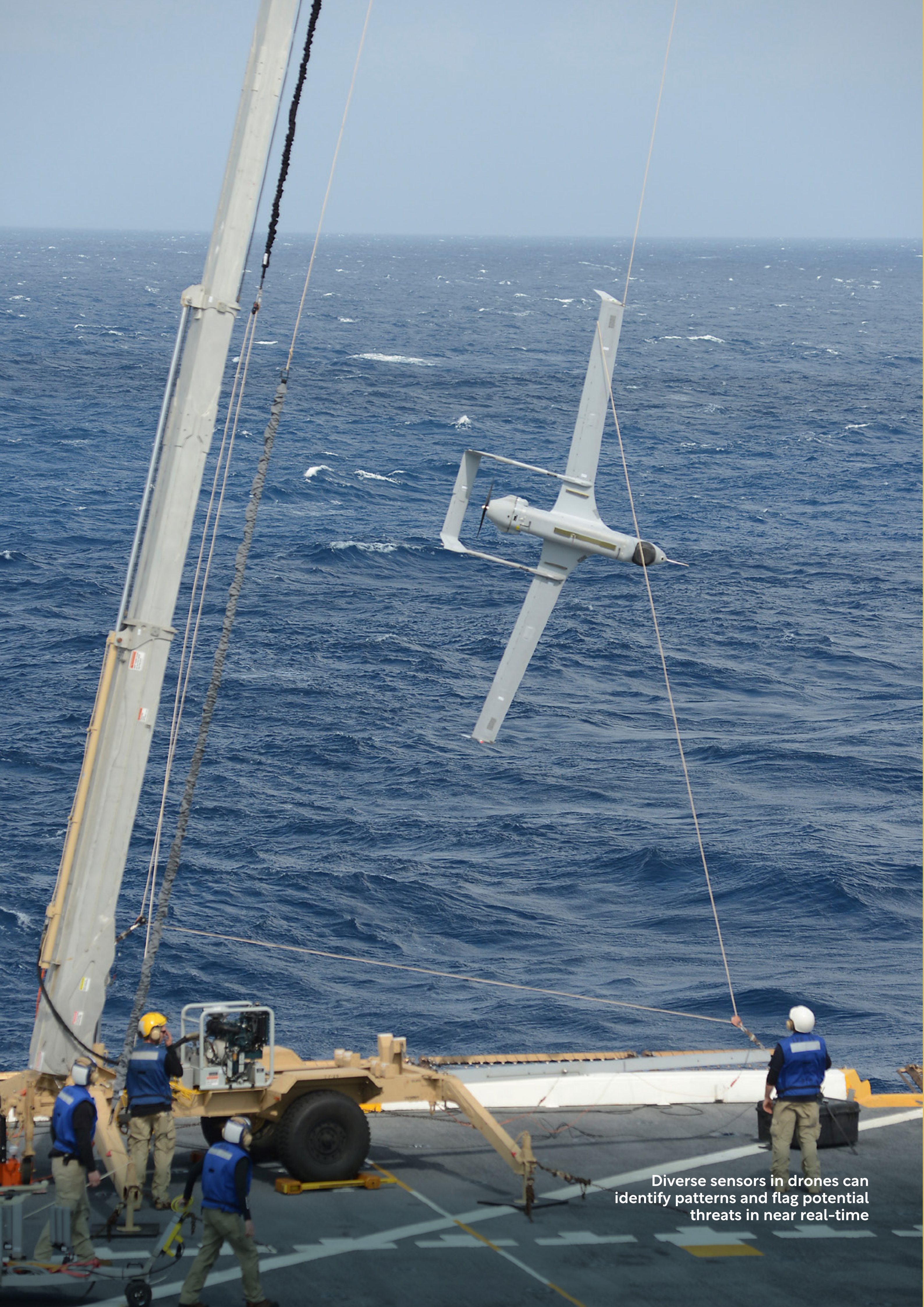


Diverse sensors in drones can identify patterns and flag potential threats in near real-time

Beyond defensive architecture, INDOPACOM is integrating AI and machine learning into cyber defence strategies. These technologies analyse vast amounts of network traffic in real-time to detect anomalies and identify sophisticated threats that might evade traditional signature-based defences. The goal is to enable responses at machine speed, crucial for staying ahead of cyber threats.

The focus on cyber resilience – the ability of systems to withstand attacks, continue essential functions and recover quickly – has become a cornerstone of INDOPACOM's approach. This involves integrating cybersecurity into mission assurance planning, hardening critical systems and developing rapid recovery capabilities.

AI systems enhance INDOPACOM decision-making capabilities

In an environment as data-saturated as the Indo-Pacific, processing information and making decisions faster than adversaries has become a strategic imperative. INDOPACOM Commander Admiral Samuel Paparo has stated that future conflicts will be won by those who can "see, understand, decide and act faster" – a recognition that has placed AI at the centre of the command's technology strategy.

This approach aligns with the Department of Defense's 2023 Data, Analytics and AI Adoption Strategy, which prioritises accelerating AI adoption to achieve "enduring decision advantage". The strategy balances technological advancement with ethical considerations, emphasising responsible AI development and deployment.

AI applications within INDOPACOM span multiple operational domains. Intelligence analysis has been transformed through algorithms that sift through massive data streams from diverse sensors – satellites, drones, unmanned surface vessels, underwater vehicles and traditional platforms – identifying patterns and flagging potential threats in near real-time. Techniques like algorithm fusion and sensor-data fusion help reconcile potentially conflicting information from multiple sources to generate more comprehensive operational pictures.

Companies like Ultra Intelligence & Communications have deployed systems such as ADSI RAIN™ to help intelligence analysts identify difficult-to-detect activities. The system uses machine learning models to nominate events of interest within seconds, allowing human analysts to focus their expertise on verification and decision-making rather than raw data processing.

Decision support tools represent another growth area. The Defense Innovation Unit's Thunderforge programme uses AI agents and large language models for wargaming, simulating scenarios, and refining courses of action for commanders at INDOPACOM and European Command. Similarly, the Defense Information Systems Agency has experimentally deployed a generative AI chatbot on classified networks within INDOPACOM to explore how language models can assist commanders and staff.

Palantir Technologies has contributed to this ecosystem through experiments at the Shadow Operations Center – Nellis (ShOC-N) where its Maven Smart System and Maverick AI assist with dynamic targeting processes, incorporating inputs from coalition partners. These systems embody the "human-in-the-loop" framework, ensuring human oversight while benefiting from machine processing speed.

Perhaps the most visible application is in autonomous systems proliferation. AI-powered drones, unmanned surface vessels, and underwater vehicles are increasingly deployed for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, extending sensor coverage in contested areas where manned platforms would face unacceptable risk. These systems often provide value through their lower cost and potential attritability, allowing for deployment in greater numbers.

ERM version 4 maintenance system aboard USS Fitzgerald demonstrates predictive capabilities

Maintenance operations across INDOPACOM are being transformed through AI-enabled predictive systems. By analysing sensor data collected from shipboard systems, aircraft components and other equipment, algorithms can identify subtle patterns indicating potential failures before they become critical problems.

The USS Fitzgerald (DDG-62) serves as a prime example with its Enterprise Remote Monitoring Version 4 (ERM v4) system. This technology analyses thousands of sensor readings per second from hull, mechanical and electrical systems, providing maintenance recommendations directly into the ship's planning system.

This condition-based approach moves beyond traditional interval-based maintenance, reducing unexpected equipment casualties, creating less disruptive maintenance scheduling, optimising logistics through predicting parts needs in advance and ultimately increasing operational availability and readiness of platforms.

The result is increased operational availability and readiness of platforms – a critical factor for maintaining credible deterrence in the Pacific.

The maintenance transformation extends beyond surface vessels to aircraft and land-based systems. The Naval Air Systems Command has implemented similar predictive capabilities for F/A-18 Super Hornets and P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft operating in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility. These aircraft generate terabytes of performance data during each mission, which is then processed to identify maintenance requirements before traditional inspection schedules would detect them.

Project Overmatch and Talisman Sabre exercises test network interoperability solutions

The advanced capabilities being pursued by INDOPACOM cannot function in

F/A-18E Super Hornets are equipped with innovative predictive capabilities

91

Specific activities required to achieve “target level” Zero Trust implementation by the end of Fiscal Year 2027

500+

Personnel equipped with wearable health monitoring devices during Exercise Talisman Sabre 23 to test AI-driven health monitoring capabilities

isolation. Their potential is unlocked only when effectively networked across domains, services and coalition partners – integration that forms the core objective of the Department of Defense's Joint All-Domain Command and Control (JADC2) concept.

JADC2 aims to connect "any sensor to any shooter," empowering commanders to sense the battlespace, process information and act decisively across all domains at relevant speed. The strategy focuses on establishing common data standards, resilient technical infrastructure, human enterprise adaptation, integration with nuclear command and control, and modernising information sharing with mission partners.

Project Overmatch represents the Navy's primary contribution to this framework. It focuses on building the resilient communications networks and digital ecosystems needed to support Distributed Maritime Operations and provide decision advantage to a hybrid fleet of manned and unmanned platforms. Given INDOPACOM's vast distances, reliance on naval forces and the need to counter sophisticated adversaries, successful implementation of Project Overmatch is considered vital for the theatre.

Project Overmatch represents a fundamental shift towards a "system-of-systems" perspective, where the network itself, and the integrated capabilities it enables, become more important than any single platform.

Integral to both JADC2 and INDOPACOM's strategy is the seamless integration of allies and partners. The command has established formal Project

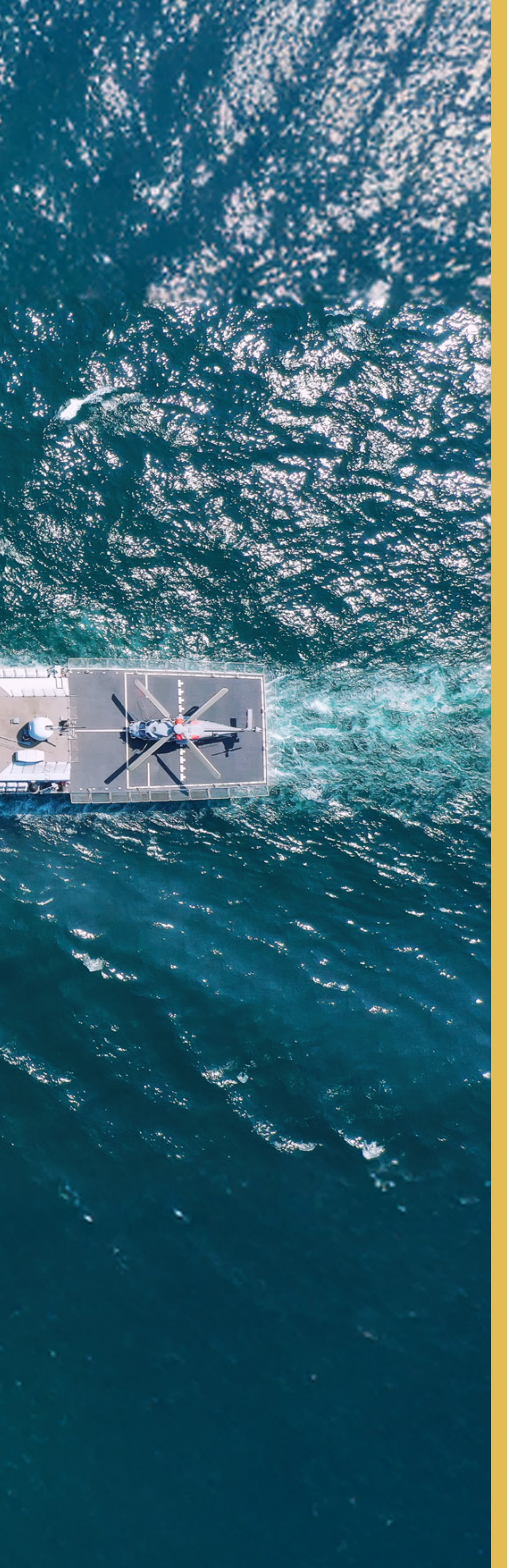
Wearable devices are using algorithms to monitor and predict risks such as heat stress, fatigue and illness

Arrangements with Five Eyes partners (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom), allowing personnel to embed directly within the Overmatch team to accelerate interoperable technology development.

Major multinational exercises serve as proving grounds for these integration efforts. Events like the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC), Valiant Shield, Talisman Sabre and Northern Edge bring together joint US forces and numerous allied nations. These exercises test and validate new technologies – including AI algorithms, unmanned systems, JADC2 components and human-machine interfaces – in realistic operational settings.

During Talisman Sabre 23, over 500 personnel across domains were equipped with wearable devices like smartwatches, using algorithms to monitor and predict risks such as heat stress, fatigue and illness. This Wearables Pilot Program demonstrated how individual health data could provide a "check engine light" for personnel wellbeing and inform leadership decisions about unit readiness.

Integrating complex technologies across legacy systems and diverse platforms presents technical difficulties, alongside substantial business opportunities



Despite the drive towards automation and AI, these initiatives demonstrate that human operators remain central to INDOPACOM's technology strategy. Technology is being developed primarily to augment human capabilities – improving decision speed, enhancing situational awareness, making training more effective and monitoring wellbeing – rather than seeking full replacement in complex operational environments.

As INDOPACOM continues its technological transformation, the command faces significant implementation challenges. Integrating complex technologies across legacy systems and diverse platforms presents technical difficulties. Ensuring robust security against determined adversaries remains a constant requirement. Cultural adaptation within the force to embrace new technologies requires persistent effort. Moreover, maintaining pace with rapid commercial technological advancements and securing sustained funding and skilled personnel are enduring requirements.

The scale of investment reflects recognition that technological advantage has become inseparable from military effectiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. For defence companies and technology firms, this transformation represents substantial business opportunities in cybersecurity architecture, AI applications, autonomous systems and network integration solutions that will continue to shape military priorities for years to come. ○

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